

*By the same Author*

A BRASS HAT IN NO MAN'S LAND

# FIVE YEARS HARD

Being an account of the fall of the Fulani  
Empire and a picture of the daily life  
of a Regimental Officer among the  
peoples of the Western Sudan, by

BRIGADIER - GENERAL

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FIVE YEARS HARD

## FIVE YEARS HARD

'Not so bad,' he replies. 'How long is it since you were in clover?'

'Eighteen months without a bed, the sky for a covering, trek ox for the menu, whisky a luxury, a string of six horses to ride and devil a care in the world! A daily brush with Brother Boger and —'

'What was the worst?' asks the young sub, who has just arrived fresh from Sandhurst.

'Brass monkey mornings!' I reply.

'What on earth are they?' he asks.

'So damned cold,' I answer, 'that one feels like a brass monkey in a refrigerator, when one wakes up to break the ice on the bucket before trekking at 3 a.m.'

'I thought it was awful hot in South Africa,' he replies.

'It is,' I answer, 'at midday it's like a furnace. That's the joke. One dresses up in cardigans and *poshteens* at dawn and later peels almost to one's pelt and ties it all on the saddle, by degrees.'

'What about the Infantry?' he enquires. 'They have no horses or saddles.'

'Oh!' I answer laughingly, 'the P.B.I. God knows, and he won't split; they get all the knocks and none of the fun.'

'Why do you call them P.B.I.?' he asks innocently.

I look at him for some seconds. Is he sincere? Is he trying to pull my leg? 'Because they are,'

## THE START

I answer . . . he found out thirteen years later . . . as a foot-slogger in France!

At this moment, Blotto, a galloping major of the Army Service Corps arrives on the scene *for* action. I had met him in the bar the previous evening when he was half-seas-over and had distinguished himself by breaking a dozen or so glasses and having a row with the senior subaltern of the Cape Town Canaries who had told him his nose would do well as a danger signal at the tail of the 'Muck train' galloping like hell away from the enemy!

Blotto feels ill; he certainly looks it.

'Come and have a drink, young Pip-Squeak,' he says, punching me on the back.

'Too early, sir,' I reply.

'Too *what?* he asks with emphasis and amazement. 'Look here, young'un, you take two things from me. First there's no bad drink, and second it's never too late or early to have a drink. I'm feeling damned ill. Bloody climate this. Come on, all of you.' We obey.

'What'll you have?' asks Blotto. We give our orders — Beer, whisky, shandy.

'A stone ginger for me, please,' I say.

'No damned stone gingers here,' says Blotto indignantly. 'What the hell d'you take us for? Children? Give him a whisky, barman . . . he'll have to learn to take his liquor like a gentleman.'

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I sip my whisky while Blotto smiles.

\* \* \*

'Dinner seems very wonderful,' I say to Mrs. Allerton, that night, 'with all you beautiful creatures dressed up to kill. You know I haven't seen a pretty frock for over a year.'

'Or a pretty face?' she asks quizzingly.

'Oh, some of the Dutch girls on the farms are very pretty,' I say.

'Yes,' she replies, 'my husband told me that last time he was down on leave.'

'What is he?' I ask.

'Don't you know?' she answers in astonishment, 'I thought everyone knew Ally, he's a Cavalry Colonel.'

'The deuce he is!' I answer . . . 'I must be careful.'

'You *must!*' she answers, 'and *so must I!*'

\* \* \*

The lazy life on the Union Castle Liner after strenuous months on the veldt is like paradise. Passengers are few. There is North, a first class Militia colonel of the old school; Hindlip, a Cavalry subaltern who thrives on Allsop's beer; Correndon, a Colonial administrator from Barotseland, and a few others.

At last Madeira is reached.

## THE START

Four officers are playing poker in the smoking room with a stranger from the Rand while others watch. The anchor is dropped. Bum boats gather round. There is a shout!

'You damned little cheat!' I hear a burly, ugly officer exclaim, as he grips the stranger by the collar with the left hand and with the right secures the seat of his breeches, holding the almost lifeless body out horizontally in front of him, for he had already 'biffed' his ear; 'I'll *larn* yer.'

'What are you going to do?' asks somebody.

'Drown the ——' replied Ugly who, true to his word — so far as is possible — walks to the side, thrusts the swindler across the rails at arms' length and lets go!

Luckily the Rand profiteer falls into the water clear of the boats and is rescued.

'That's a good lesson for you, my boy,' says dear old Colonel North to me (he wasn't really *very* old, but in those days a colonel to me was as ancient as Methuselah), 'never play cards with a stranger on board ship!'

\* \* \*

Some of us disembark at Madeira for Cape Coast Castle. Read's Hotel is pleasant, but I'm in trouble. I have no mufti! 'You can't go round the town at night in uniform,' says Binger to me, 'get a suit of clothes made!'

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o'clock arrives; twelve; one. Enter Binger — to the smoking room.

'Well?' we all ask in bated breath.

'Well!' says Binger beaming.

'Where've *you* been?' I ask.

'Breakfasting with the Governor in the Fort,' says Binger looking down his nose at me.

We don't believe him. 'What happened?' I ask.

'The Governor is a sport,' says Binger. 'I was marched in front of him and he asked who I was. When I told him he cleared the room and looked at me. "A leetle festive?" he asked. "I'm sorry, sir," I said, "I'd been dining." "Very vell dining," he said, nodding his head. "Ven I go to London I must insult your guard at ze Palace, I zink!" "I apologize, sir," I said. He rang a bell and said something sharp in Portuguese. The guard marched in and I thought they were going to take me off again. "I vill tell them," he said, "you are officer British an' my King and your King are big friends. Your country and my country are ancient allies. You vill then apologize to my King in front of his guard. See?" "Yes, sir," I said. I apologized. The guard marched out, and we were once more alone. "Now, sir," he said, "you will honour me at *déjeuner*?" I was thunderstruck. We strolled across to his Palace where he ushered me to a chair and began to mix a drink. When he had finished he

## THE START

brought a long tumbler full of crushed iced drink and other things to me. "Drink with me," he said, "to King Edward of England, and King Carlos of Portugal, and Torres Vedras . . . and," he added, "it is very good after a very good dinner, I know, and a night in the guard's prison, I expect" — and then he laughed loudly!

'I suppose,' says Bolton, a guardsman, putting his eyeglass in his eye, 'you felt a bit of an ass?'

'Worse, much worse, I felt a —'

'You were,' says Bill Thomson, a gunner.

'Not so much of it,' says Binger, nettled, 'it might very easily have been you.'

'Or Bolton,' says Thomson with a laugh. 'A Grenadier takes his liquor like a . . . a . . . ' says Bolton. 'A Grenadier,' interrupted Thomson.

'Yes . . . and therefore a gentleman,' I remark.

\* \* \*

We find ourselves at the Catalena Hotel, Las Palmas, waiting for an Elder Dempster boat. The party has thinned down as Bolton and a few others who can afford it find that, by taking a Union Castle Liner to England, they can snatch forty-eight hours in Town and return by the boat we are to catch at Las Palmas, and the authorities need never know unless one of them gets thrown out of the 'Empire,' lodged in Vine Street and had up at the 'Junior

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Marlborough.' They must watch that . . . a likely happening after eighteen months on the veldt with money to burn.

At Las Palmas, 'Ugly,' who threw the swindler overboard at Madeira, lets us down. Very drunk, after a visit to the Cathedral, he returns to the hotel, forces his way into a wrong room, frightens a lady's English companion to death and pays the price. Next morning he apologizes . . . or tries to . . . but the game is up.

'You call yourself a gentleman,' scornfully remarks this charming and exceedingly fascinating English girl . . . 'the manager thinks otherwise.' She pulls herself up to her full height, throws her head back, and turns on her heels. 'Ugly' quits, and we are left to bow our heads in shame.

\* \* \*

To-day a trip down the West Coast is a mediocre performance. Thirty years ago things were otherwise. Now many women travel as passengers; then the only members of the fair sex to venture were a few gallant souls whose lives were dedicated to the service of nursing or God and 'the nigger.' What those women must have thought of the behaviour of some of the 'white men' I do not know. It was not *bad*, it was merely silly. Whisky and cocktails ran like water in Trafalgar Square.

## THE START

By midnight, the remnants of the smoking room . . . not many . . . full of drink and devilry . . . would pillow fight in the sleeping quarters . . . sing . . . and wake people up.

But there was no real vice in it all . . . good humour prevailed . . . that was the saving clause.

\* \* \*

At Accra, the capital of the Gold Coast, men came on board to 'see the skipper,' i.e. to drink iced drinks; at Lagos men came on board to 'see the purser,' i.e. to drink iced drinks and raid the refrigerator for chilled partridge; at Forcados one man came on board to 'hear English spoken' and find out if beer could still be cool.

\* \* \*

At Forcados our time to depart up river arrived. A week's journey up the Niger, in a stern-wheeler, is ahead of us. All is novel. I like it. An uncomfortable branch boat arrives to take us to Burutu where there is a hulk in which resides a white-faced official who is Transport Officer of Marine, agent of Government of Northern Nigeria, bottle-washer and store-keeper.

On the branch boat a 'palm oil ruffian,' in other words a trader, dies of booze. They don't seem to think much about it, as they lay him out in the twenty-foot-long saloon along with our lunch.

## FIVE YEARS HARD

The mate approaches the skipper and nods towards the body. I watch and listen. 'This is an interesting introduction to the "white man's grave",' I say to Binger who is rather subdued . . . he has heard someone say 'whisky kills quicker than malaria.' He does not answer.

'Are you going to chuck the stiff overboard?' I hear the mate ask his master.

The latter pulls a face. 'He's rotten,' he says, 'he stinks now . . . will he last?'

'Three hours?' says the mate. 'I don't think so . . . it'll take an hour to sew him up anyhow, and we get over the bar before that.'

'You can get him ready in less than an hour. Go ahead. We'll sink him at the bar . . . a very suitable place for 'im,' replies the skipper laughing loudly.

I prefer to stand on the scorching deck rather than sit in the shaded saloon where the body is being prepared for sea burial.

The plank is run out. The body, covered with the Union Jack, is brought forward. We gather round.

'Don't take your 'elmets off,' warns the skipper. 'One job like this in a day is enough for me!'

The skipper takes a little Prayer Book out of his pocket, remarking that he will cut the service short as it is too hot for 'new 'ands.'

## THE START

We hear the opening sentences of the burial service and then the committal: 'We therefore commit his body to the deep.' 'Let her go,' shouts the mate.

There is a splash. A shark's fin cuts the surface of the water like a knife. We rivet our eyes on the horizon.

'To be turned into corruption . . . (when the sea shall give up her dead)' continues the sailor. . . . Will he never finish? I think. The iron deck is almost red hot.

The soles of my feet are burning inside the rubber-soled tennis shoes. Will he never end? 'Amen' comes at last. We break off quietly.

'Come in and have drinks on me,' says the skipper, leading the way to the little stuffy saloon which recently served as a mortuary.

'Cocktails, Sam,' he shouts to his 'boy'. 'Yes, sar, me coming, sar,' answers the yam-eating Yoruba at the top of his shrill voice.

'What a peculiar voice he has,' I remark.

The skipper chuckles. 'Doctored by witch-doctors in his youth, he had a curse on him and I've cursed him enough too!' he says.

'What happened?' I asked.

'He doesn't remember much, but somehow he got to Lagos as a slave and escaped.'

Sam arrives with a round of cocktails on a tray

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carried by a smaller boy and reverently swizzles each in turn as he reaches each white man.

‘Not for me, thank you,’ says Binger.

We look at him in amazement! Binger refusing a drink!

‘Cold feet?’ asks the skipper cheerily. ‘That will never do. More people die of funk than fear.’

‘And still more of liquor than either,’ adds the mate with a laugh.

‘Hush-hush,’ says the skipper, ‘mustn’t say that — in public — Malaria keeps the pay up — booze makes life possible — after all it’s the white man’s grave!’

Binger makes a bolt for the side and vomits loudly.

‘Poor lad,’ says the mate, ‘but it’s damned good for him. No man ever died in this country who could do that twice a day, last thing at night and first thing in the morning. In the Lagos Hausas, in the old days, they used to have a “catting parade” at 11 p.m. and 5 a.m., taking the time from the Colonel!’

## CHAPTER II

### UP NIGER

IN the 'good old days,' of 'bad old ways,' every man who wanted to reach Lokoga (the military centre at the junction of the Rivers Benue and Niger) or the upper reaches, had to proceed up river in a stern-wheeler, and perhaps finish the journey in a native canoe. Then there was not a yard of railroad in Northern or Southern Nigeria, and only a few miles in Lagos, yet things were more pleasant than they are to-day — at least from the point of view of an inveterate campaigner. Then we had no use for 'Ascot in Africa,' the aping of Simla by garrison 'ladies' in fierce competition with each other, at the expense of their hard-up husbands, on the fringe of the Sahara, or the easily acquired 'side' and intolerance of some stuck-up bureaucrats ruling the roost in out-of-the-way places and muddy surroundings.

\* \* \*

We arrive at Burutu hulk and take our soundings.

All is so novel. A jabbering band of unemployed 'boys', just paid off by masters gone home by the last mail-boat, surround us and in pidgin-English

## FIVE YEARS HARD

acclaim their wants while they brandish 'books' or characters. A few old hands who have returned with us know the ropes and the value of these 'books,' for there is great caste rivalry between these 'boys'. The servant of a subaltern is streets ahead of the servant of a 'colour sargie' — the equivalent of White colour sergeant in the lingo of 'boys' — while the black batman of a 'licator' (the nearest they can get to 'Doctor') is about on a par with the henchman of a Resident (political officer) who is known to them only as a 'Judge'.

At present, I am told, I require only one 'boy' — a personal servant — to look after my clothes, wait on me at mess, guide me home, perhaps, after mess, and generally attend to my personal wants. Later, in the bush, I may need a cook and certainly a dokie (or horse) boy. Every officer in the Waffs — the short for West African Frontier Force — rides a pony and receives half a crown a day for its keep. That is a God-send — not the half crown, but the horse-flesh. We require food for the up-river journey. How long will that take? The dry season has begun which means the great river is shallow beyond the delta. Where we now are is a raging torrent. All these considerations are made easy for us, for the organization of Sir Frederick Lugard, the High Commissioner, is first class.

'I'm sorry,' says the chief white man of the hulk

## UP NIGER

(he has to be chief as he is the only one). 'You will be here at least a week, as you missed the *Empire* on her return trip, and there is no government craft due till the next mail goes out, so you'd better settle down. I'll read you out some regulations, representing, as I do, the Government of Northern Nigeria, recently established, and its various departments.'

'Fire ahead,' says Dickinson, a major in an Irish regiment, always impatient of pomposity, 'and look sharp.'

The eyes of the pundit flash! Who is this novice insulting him in his very own demesne? 'On behalf of the Treasury, I wish to say,' continued the man of many departments, 'your colonial pay began from date of embarkation. Your local allowance of five shillings a day, payable locally, does not begin till you cross the border at Idda (you are now in Southern Nigeria) while your tour of service, to count for leave, does not begin till you gain the same objective — Northern Nigeria.'

'Do you mean to say — ' I interject.

'I do,' replies the great white man 'and don't interrupt!' Silence follows.

'On behalf of the Medical Department I wish to say,' continues the pundit, 'you are advised to take five grains of quinine per day in liquid form, as a preventative against malaria, drink only boiled and filtered water and refrain from intercourse with

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native women. "Chop" or ration boxes will be issued to you on payment; one is supposed to last one man a fortnight; you can sign for them and the cost will be debited to your accounts. I have nothing else to add.'

'May I speak?' asks Major Dickinson quietly. The pundit nods assent.

'I have no filter,' says the Major, 'and —'

'Why not?' replies the pompous one.

'I have come straight from a war where they did not have them (despite the fact that men died like flies of enteric) neither have I seen the inside of a shop for over a year —'

'I can issue filters, camp beds, mosquito nets and quinine,' says the magician.

'And whisky?' asks Binger, who had recovered.

'Yes, and gin too,' says the obliging one, 'on payment, on your signatures —'

At this moment a Niger Company stern-wheeler passed by up-river bound and ties up at a wharf near the Niger Company Store.

'What's that boat?' asks Dickinson.

'A Niger,' replies the pundit, 'you can't go in her, it's against the rules.'

'What rules?' asks Dickinson.

'Rules of Government,' replies the puppet, reverently closing his eyes.

'Do you expect me to stay here in this swamp,

## UP NIGER

losing five bob a day and qualifying for fever and not qualifying for leave while that boat goes to where I want to go?' asks the major as he walks away.

The Niger Company official on duty at the store tells us he can send five officers to Lokoga at £5 each. Major Dickinson asks four of us to accompany him. At the hulk we engage 'boys', buy drink and food and give orders for our baggage to be moved to the stern-wheeler.

'Where're you taking that stuff to?' shouts pundit to a half naked 'boy.'

'Me go sar, Lokoga sar, with white man, major sar, Niger Company girrigee (steamship) sar,' shouts the 'boy' from the gangway.

'You bring that bloody stuff back one time,' orders pundit; 'nothing goes off here without my orders.'

Fortunately the timely arrival of suave Major Dickinson puts an end to the 'discussion.'

Taking pundit by the arm he gently leads him to the cabin which does duty as an office. A major's crown is worth something!

'Look here,' says the major, 'we are white men in a native country. I'm going to Lokoga in that stern-wheeler with four others. The responsibility is mine. If the Government will not refund the money the loss is ours. We are doing no harm —'

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'But,' says pundit, white with amazement, 'it's against the regulations.'

'Regulations be damned,' says the major, 'when you've served as long under them as I have you will be able to respect them as much or as little as I do, according to circumstances.'

\* \* \*

Once aboard the lugger things are easy. Dickinson, much older than any of us, is so helpful. Had he not done much the same kind of thing before on the Irrawaddy, during the Burmese war of annexation in the 'eighties?

We doss down at night on camp beds drawn before our departure, issue tinned food to the 'pool' cook, laze in long chairs and sip not too cool drinks after sundown—will the sun never go down?—and marvel at the savage scenery.

We appear to travel quickly in and out of the narrow, deep passages of the delta of the great river, while we pass native villages from which expert canoe men dart out in frail craft and jabber across the water to our crew in weird language. At night we tie up at the side while mosquitoes devour us, till we get under the nets provided by Government, and insects sting and buzz. And then to sleep. It is all too good, I think.

Next day the river begins to narrow. We reach

# THE NIGER



*Above : Canoes in the delta.*

*Below : Scenery—Upper Reaches.*



## UP NIGER

the straight, still over a mile wide in flood time. Now sand-banks reach five hundred yards on either side while crocodiles bask in the sun at the water's edge, and the Niger becomes little more than a mere winding trickle. 'Hippos' abound in the deep places.

'I guess this is sure heaven in hell,' says Caster, a Canadian who is seconded from the Canadian Militia for service with the Waffs, and who finds the temperature in the tropics rather different from fifty below zero in Winnipeg —

'You wait,' replied Dickinson, a natural mechanic who should have been an engineer. 'I don't like the sound of the engine and I believe we are in for trouble, then you'll get your hell, you'll have to get out and push.'

'How deep is the water now, major?' I ask.

'Two feet six,' he replies; 'we draw two feet.'

Dickinson is right. Soon the engine stops. The 'boys' and native passengers jump out on to the sand in high glee, and run and stretch on the sand banks: time to them is nothing.

It is obvious that the native mechanics and engineers are hopelessly at sea — but for Dickinson we should have been there for days till rescued by a passing ship.

Thanks to the major, who, stripping to the waist, assumes complete control in the engine room, we

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reach Onitcha on the left bank, and there are greeted by missionaries who send gifts of fresh fruit, milk, eggs, and vegetables.

We spend a pleasant evening with them while Dickinson mends the engine.

We visit the Protestants and the Roman Catholics and later return to our ship for a drink, as the Missions are 'dry.'

'What beats me,' says Binger, after his third, 'is, how do those God palaver men, all Christians, explain to the niggers that, although all are white, their religions differ?'

'What the hell has it got to do with us anyway?' asks Tanker, a subaltern in the Blues — 'Boy,' he shouts, 'Whisky soda.' 'Yes sar,' comes the echo.

And then to bed once more.

\* \* \*

'We must forge ahead,' says Dickinson, next morning, 'as best we can. The engine is tied together with wire! We must reach Idda at all costs and there our tour of service begins, provided we cross the frontier. Even if we stick a little this side of it we can, I suppose, trek across and qualify! I had hoped to escape from red tape in the hinterland of Africa.'

'So you have,' says Binger. 'Look at Tanker over there bathing with the belles of Onitcha and only

## UP NIGER

one string of beads between the lot! No red tape there, sir; you couldn't do that in the Bath Club!'

\* \* \*

After many disappointments and breakdowns we steam past Idda and in the distance see the Union Jack flying on the fort. The country becomes more open and hilly. Borrowing a carbine from one of the Waffs' special escort on board, we pot at 'crocs' from the upper deck as they bask in the sun on the sand.

In the evening, after we tie up on the right bank of the river, I cast round with a borrowed gun among the scrub in the hopes of bringing home something for the pot. I have no knowledge of what may get up in the feathered line. A couple of what look like partridges rise in front of me and I bring them down, while later I ignominiously 'murder' a guinea fowl sitting on a tree branch in the vicinity of a clearing which has obviously at one time been under cultivation. Three cartridges, three birds, the kind of average to be worked for in a country where gun ammunition has to be counted and treated like gold on account of the difficulty of transport. As I turn back I perceive a flight of duck coming towards the river. It is flight time; they are going to feed. I crouch down as I have so often done in the Hebrides while after wild fowl. They have

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not seen me! Over they come, nearer, nearer, they swerve and I fire — a long shot of No. 5 into the brown — one drops. My 'boy' marks it down. 'It looks like a mallard,' I say to the 'boy' who shrugs his shoulders as I pick it up.

'Him good beef, sar,' he says with a broad grin.

'A bit fishy I suspect,' I reply.

'Him no fish sar,' says the 'boy,' looking at me in astonishment, 'him burd.'

As we approach the stern-wheeler there is great shouting between my 'boy' and the other natives on the boat which, of course, I do not understand.

'What are they saying?' I ask Gray, an old time British N.C.O., as I walk the plank.

'They say you are a king of the gun — 'sariki bindiga' in Hausa — because you never miss, but a 'wahr-wahr' because you don't know the difference between a fish and a bird,' replies the British N.C.O.

'What's a wahr-wahr?' I ask.

'Well, sir,' says old Gray respectfully, 'the nearest English equivalent might be "bloody fool".'

\* \* \*

Next day at noon we reach Lokoga, the important military centre at the junction of the Rivers Niger and Benue overlooked by Mount Patti.

## CHAPTER III

### LOKOGA

'I DON'T think much of the look of this place,' says Binger as he leans over the side, regarding with interest the agility of the native members of the Marine department and the skill of the skipper as they manœuvre the craft alongside in a surprisingly short space of time.

'What's the matter with it?' asks Miller, a second tour subaltern, rather indignantly.

'Look at that tin house, what is it?' asks Binger with a contemptuous smile, 'Why tin in the tropics?'

'That's the Niger company store,' says Miller; 'tin doesn't wear out.'

'But what about the poor devils who work in the heat under the tin; don't they wear out?' asks Binger.

'Yes,' he replies, 'what else are they for?'

'There's Jones on the wharf: he's a marine superintendent, wonderful fellow, puts away a bottle a day without winking and —'

'Where's the wharf,' asks Binger.

'We're at the wharf,' replies Miller.

'It's only a mud bank,' says Binger; 'if everything's on a par with it, we're in a dud show.'

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At this moment an officer arrives mounted on a rather seedy, weedy-looking pony. 'The Adjutant and S.S.O.,' says Miller, 'he'll give you your orders. I'm for Jebba, I'm 1st battalion.'

The S.S.O., who wears two stars, thus indicating he's a captain, looks ill. He, too, is like his 'tat,' a little on the weedy side. He asks our names and tells us our fate. Major Dickinson is told he is for the Jebba battalion while I have to remain at Lokoga with the second.

We are told to go to the mess, a mile away, where lunch is ready.

'How do we get there?' asks Binger of the S.S.O.—an unfortunate remark.

'Can't you walk?' is the stinging reply to poor Binger.

'Oh, yes, rather,' says Binger, 'only I thought everyone was carried about in hammocks on the coast.'

'You're not on the coast,' says the S.S.O., 'here we *ride* or walk.'

We saunter along the dusty road — a mere track — and pass hundreds of natives resting in the shade of the mango trees. The sun pours down. We begin to sweat. When we reach the mess we are as if we had just come out of a Turkish bath with all our clothes on.

The Colonel greets us.

## LOKAGO

'He looks a good sort,' says Binger.

'So you were wrong,' I reply, 'in judging all things by the wharf.'

The Colonel is an Ulsterman, Mactier from north of the Boyne. A captain in his regiment, he held the temporary rank of lieut.-colonel. From conversation at lunch I gather he is a first class fighting man, a good 'bush soldier,' a fine polo player, a C.O. adored by his native soldiers on account of his bravery in action and respected and admired by his officers on account of his fairness.

'The natives call him Maidoreaki, or the Man with the hump of War,' says an officer nicknamed Mock Turtle, for some reason or other, although his real name is Smith-Johnson. 'See his rounded shoulders, he stoops, they say, because of the cares of war. The natives are awfully good and quick at conjuring nick-names. I wonder what they call you?' he adds.

'Hang it man,' I reply, 'I've only been here five minutes and —'

'That doesn't matter,' says Mock Turtle, 'if you've done something damned silly already, you've not escaped — I'll find out from my "boy" later.'

'Why your "boy"?' I ask.

'Oh, the boys know everything. They have a regular club where they exchange information behind the scenes and there is intense rivalry over

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their masters. If one officer has a better horse than another his "boy" puts on side over the others, and if an officer has brought down a young Fulani girl who "pass all others", as the "boys" say, then his "boy" rules the roost in the "boys" quarters, and more than likely shares the Fulani girl with his master, although the blithering idiot doesn't know it!

'Not a very satisfactory arrangement,' says Binger, who has been listening in.

Mock Turtle shrugs his shoulders. 'Better to keep off women out here,' he says. 'I do.'

It is polo day. We are told polo is played on the parade ground twice a week. All officers have to play, whether they like it or not; and a few civilians turn out as well. Some of the ponies from up country take kindly to the game, although their mouths have generally been spoilt by their one-time native owners who use the cruellest of bits.

'Play polo?' asks Colonel Mactier of me.

'Well sir, I hit the ball about a bit when I was with M.I. in South Africa, but I don't understand the rules very well.'

'You were with M.I. were you,' he replies, 'then you'll soon be O.K. Everyone plays here, keeps us alive. Four chukkars each as a rule, washed down by half a dozen rounds of cocktails before dinner. We pool our spare mounts. The gunner runs the

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polo, Tom Spindle, a good fellow who will go far if he lives — he may not.'

The quartermaster shows us our quarters — Dickinson and I have adjoining rooms in a wooden hut raised on piles above the ground.

'If you send your "boys" over to the mess at 4 o'clock, they will get your tea. Be on the polo ground at 4.30 sharp,' says the quarter-bloke, a regular old-time regular, the type which runs the British Army.

The ground which did duty both for drill and polo with an occasional gymkhana thrown in, was of full size, and actually boasted some 'doubb grass' as a covering which helped to keep the dust down. Above it towered Patti, a hill of considerable height, which, on account of the flatness of the surrounding country, might well have been called a mountain. The Niger flowed sluggishly towards the sea at right angles, while the course of the Benue could be followed with the naked eye sleepily winding in and out of the sand-banks on its journey from Yola and the Cameroons. Thick bush covered the whole country-side right up to the cleared space on which were now assembled some two dozen officers and a few civilians in spotless polo kit, polo ponies with their 'dokie boys', mess waiters, personal servants and orderlies.

'You haven't got an orderly yet,' says Mock

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Turtle to Binger, 'you'll get one from your company when you are posted — great fellows. They clean your kit, turn you out for parade, boss up your "boys" and are responsible for your horses and women if you keep such luxuries. We generally take them out shooting — a good orderly is worth his weight in gold.'

'We're rather out of it with no polo breeches,' I say. At that moment I hear names being shouted out by Tom Spindle.

'Calling out the first chukkar,' says Mock Turtle. 'You're number three, on White's side — we play Whites and Reds, reds wear a red sash. Tom is your back. God help you! You'll hear some language; take no notice of it. The great thing about our polo is that everyone blackguards each other sometimes with cause, sometimes without, and many don't know the rules. The Colonel is playing back on the other side; he has a goodly flow of adjectives too.'

'I don't know the rules,' I say to Mock Turtle. 'Don't they ever have practice games?'

He laughs: 'Follow the ball,' he advises 'ride off your opposite number, don't cross, and don't lose your temper when someone curses you and then hit him over the head with your polo stick as I saw done recently. It's simple.'

'Yes,' I reply, 'like everything else, when you know how.'

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The game begins. We line up. Tom Spindle gets off. The ball goes out and is thrown in. Mock Turtle gets possession and dribbles towards the centre. I hear a loud voice shouting behind me.

'Ride him, ride him, you little ——,' strikes my ears. I wonder what he wants me to do? I ask myself. All is whirl and confusion. So far as I am concerned Mock Turtle has a good run; he can hit, I say to myself. He just misses a goal. The ball is hit in from behind. Spook, another gunner, stops it. 'Hook his stick you b.f.,' I hear shouted at me. Hook his stick, I say to myself; whose stick, which stick? 'Hook, hook,' they all shout.

'Do something, you bloody little ass,' shouts Tom Spindle. Indeed I will. I hit the Colonel's stick a terrific clout with mine and, as he is taken entirely unawares, the loop breaking, his stick hurls through the air only to hit Tom Spindle on the nose.

'What the hell do you think you're doing,' roars the Colonel, 'I wasn't on the ball.'

'I'm very sorry, sir,' I stammer, 'I didn't know, I —'

'Hurt, Tom?' asks the Colonel.

It is not very tactful perhaps to ask a man whose nose is bleeding like a turned-on tap and whose vision has been transferred to the stars, if he is hurt, but Tom Spindle took it well —

'Carry on,' he says, 'it's all in the day's work.'

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The gong sounds, my first chukkar ends!

Looking back on that first day of polo and polite language, 'off side,' crossing, raw ponies and screaming at Lokoga, I marvel that many were not killed during those hectic and hardening days of adventure.

The third chukkar is announced by the banging of the mess gong. My name is called out.

'Do you want me to play after my performance,' I ask the Colonel? 'Why not?' he answers in surprise. 'Well sir,' I say, 'I'm so dangerous!' He laughs.

'Dangerous,' he says, 'Dangerous! Everything's dangerous in this damned country. The wine, the whisky, the women, the war, malaria, blackwater, and even the home *leave*! Why not the polo? I'd as soon break my neck by being crossed by you at Lokoga as peg out in convulsions after being hit by a poisoned arrow fired at me from behind a bush by a Munshi.'

As the sun goes down, the rattle of horses' hoofs on the hard sun-baked ground ceases.

The ponies are led off to their stables for grooming, water and feed while the better horse-masters among the white men supervise the bran mashes and pass the ponies clean. Cocktails are available in front of some of the officers' quarters where deck chairs are brought out and set in circles. The 'mellow' time of verse and rhyme has arrived to

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kill the monotony. The conviviality is congenial and infectious, as men who have worked hard and sweated harder, ridden hard and cursed harder, are now ready for the potent fumes, the all-alluring tingle of contentment which seduces wisdom when Bacchus reigns

‘We have one rule here,’ says the Colonel to me, ‘if a fellow gets tight on cocktails he goes to bed and keeps away from mess — mess is a parade.’

‘Supposing,’ I ask, ‘he is so tight that he does not know what he is doing and goes to mess — what then?’

‘Ah,’ replies the Colonel laughingly, ‘that seldom happens, as someone, his “boy”, or a brother officer, or the mess steward, collars him and keeps him out of the ante-room or mess, if by mistake he gets as far. But if he does get through the mesh and makes a fool of himself he gets it in the neck at orderly room, next day! Lots go to mess half tight, or very tight, yet are able to carry it off, that’s all right. We are hardened here and can stand a lot.’

Round after round of strong and seductive cocktails carry the crowd to the heights of mesmeric oblivion, merriment and forgetfulness. Nobody cares a hoot for anyone else save the Colonel. . . . Respect for him is automatic.

The first mess bugle sounds — half an hour for tub, sober up and change.

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As I stumble to my quarters I figure out the chances of getting to mess safe. I remember the Colonel's warning.

'Am I sober enough to go to mess?' I ask my 'boy'.

'Massa be all right,' replies the Hausa lad with a grin. 'Massa he go cat, he be well! Massa he go on veranda he hear plenty officers make har-hoik noise, bourassa he come up.'

I deduce that what my 'boy' wants is to make me vomit.

'Bourassa,' I learnt later means alcoholic drink in general and spirits in particular, in the Hausa language.

Having come direct from the war, I have no white mess kit so am lent a suit by an officer while I draw a green cummerbund from the quartermaster's stores. A pair of white tennis shoes completes the outfit.

Having taken Oudu's advice, for such is the name of my 'boy' and armed with a Lord's lamp which he carries in front of me, I make for mess. We reach the steps and turn left. The lights in the ante-room reflect a medley of mosquitoes, flies, flying ants, all buzzing round the glow — while a punka sways to and fro, at rapid pace, for the punka 'boy' is well awake. Officers in unblemished white stand round and sip their sherry and bitters for all the world as

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if they were in Corunna Barracks, Aldershot. I enter and bow to the senior officer present — the Colonel.

‘Good evening sir,’ I suavely murmur with courtly grace.

‘Good evening, Crozier,’ he replies with a wonderful smile. I wonder if this is good enough for him, I think to myself — and aloud to a neighbouring Irishman, Donovan of the Royal Dublin Militia: ‘These fellows are all wonderful, half of them were half-seas-over half an hour ago.’

‘Hush,’ he replies, ‘don’t break the spell. Everyone’s braced up in here, some will flop when they sit down to dinner. If you *get through* dinner it doesn’t matter. Parade ceases when the senior officer gets up, unless he’s so tight himself that he can’t and then it obviously doesn’t matter!’

‘Dinner is served, sir,’ announces the dusky steward from Lagos.

‘Come in, Crozier,’ says that dear fellow, the Colonel, taking my arm. ‘I forgot to tell you you’re off to the bush to-morrow or the day after, to Wushishi, where there are some M.I. with Berty Porter, of the 19th Hussars. You have M.I. experience. Good fellow, Porter, a thruster who has been noted in the *Gazette* for a brevet on obtaining his troop for a mad show at Bida when his C.O. got the sack for singeing the Emir’s whiskers. He nearly

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got hacked to pieces, but Porter got him out. Porter should have got a V.C., and might have, had not the whole thing been contrary to orders. But it put an end to insolence on the part of the Emir.'

'What's the Emir doing now sir?' I ask eagerly.

'He was whacked a few weeks ago,' replies the Colonel, 'I was in the show, practically no fighting, but many killed on the other side and a big advance into the hinterland. All is quiet in the Bida or Nupe Province. An old friend of mine, Burden, a soldier, a first class fellow, is there as Resident. What he doesn't know about the nigger isn't worth knowing. You'll pass through a bit of the newly acquired country on your way up to Porter, who has been practically isolated and living on the country for over a year on the Zaria Road, and is in rags.'

The soup arrives — The usual 'carzar' or chicken — followed by tinned whitebait and chicken cutlets.

'Champagne,' says the Colonel to his 'boy' standing behind him, pointing to my glass.

We discuss South Africa, the Spion Kop fiasco, Buller, and the like. 'I was fed up not getting there,' says the Colonel. 'They wouldn't let me leave here, but I have had a show each dry season, and my usual leave; so I can't grouse.'

As dinner progresses the conversation becomes easier, more convivial, less formal.

'We are always ready,' says the Colonel, 'to move

## MAKING THE SOLDIER



*Above :* Recruits at drill.

*Below :* In action six months later.



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at short notice in case punitive measures are required in the bush. *We* can move in an hour but it takes a little longer to collect transport, carriers, stern-wheelers or canoes. When young Carnegie, a Resident, was murdered a few months ago, a few miles from here, across the river, we were away to avenge his death in three hours, and back in ten days having thoroughly done the job, killed a few, burnt villages, and crops, etc. This is a first-class country in which to learn real soldiering, for we not only train our men ourselves, but lead them in action and often act on our own initiative.'

'You're often on active service?' I remark.

'We are *always* on active service,' he replies. 'This is a Protectorate, so in accordance with the law, active service conditions always prevail. Sometimes we are more active than at others, but we are always on active service.'

'How many M.I. shall I have?' I ask.

'Only about fifty,' the Colonel tells me. 'It consists of ponies, captured by Porter from Paiko, Bida and other places. Horse sickness is very bad. They have some veterinary stores and saddlery. I must get up now, even if I come back. The fellows are cursing me already, I know, for not letting them go to whist and poker.'

The departure of the Colonel is the signal for a general move. Some play whist and poker in the

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ante-room, others come back and sit on at the dinner table and drink and sing. They make me sing 'Killaloe' and 'John Peel.' I watch the poker for a bit. Do they ever go to bed? I think, as I look at the clock, the hands of which point to 1 a.m. Two o'clock arrives, three, four — men singing, cross the square to their quarters, arm in arm, side swaying first left, then right. There are shouts of laughter, Moriarty has fallen down a disused well! What a joke!

'Are you there, Moriarty?' shouts a wag. There is no sound. Lamps are lowered. Faithful orderlies descend and carry Moriarty to the surface.

'He's all right,' shouts Mock Turtle, as they lay the 'corpse' out for dead, 'he's only tight.'

Meanwhile a fierce game of poker has been in progress. The Musketry Officer, who has lost considerably, has played and bluffed his all. His money, his guns, his ponies, his saddlery, his musical box. All has gone. He signs a post-dated cheque.

'Time,' calls the quartermaster, as the clock strikes 4.30, the agreed time for finish.

'A final round of drinks,' shouts the impoverished Musketry expert. 'I'll pay, I've no money, but I can still sign a chit.'

Next morning I woke up to the sound of words of command uttered by the men of the night before. Smart, alert, ill under the surface, the pomp of war

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is as if there never had been a poker party, never a sing-song, never a night-before. The Colonel strides about the polo ground from company to company. Here he finds a fault, there he utters words of encouragement, and all the time he is thinking of the cool beer which awaits him in his quarters on the way to breakfast!

I see the Musketry Officer go up and salute. There is a conversation. He salutes again and turns about.

'These men are wonderful,' says Dickinson standing by my side in his pyjamas on the veranda of our quarters.

'They are making Nigeria,' I reply, 'not for self profit, but for the fun of the thing; there are no pagoda trees to shake here as there were in India.'

On my way to breakfast, I pass the Musketry Officer.

'I'm off to Keffi,' he says, 'the C.O.'s taken pity on me. I'll work off my poker debts there in six months. No expenses; and I'll probably get a show at Yola.'

\* \* \*

I'm told I can move to Muraji by stern-wheeler in two days' time.

'Luck,' says Mock Turtle, 'that'll give you a guest night here.'

Guest night! What of last night! I think.

The guest night arrives.

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We drink and sing, and sing and drink; cock fighting, steeple-chasing over and under the tables and through the windows. Table jumping, chair jumping — a Nigerian guest night! Next morning, Binger, over a bottle of Bass, asks which turn I consider the star turn of the night before.

‘Star turn,’ I say emphatically, ‘there was only one which stood out.’

‘Which was that?’ asks Binger.

‘Tom Spindle singing “Sally in our Alley” at 3 a.m., stone sober, yet done to the world.’

‘Where’s Mock Turtle?’ he asks.

‘Haven’t you heard? Just as he had got to bed somehow, a message arrived saying half a company had to start for Kabba at 4.30 a.m. where there was trouble. He was on Mobile Column. So off he went.’

‘Did he get off in time?’ asks Binger.

‘What a question to ask!’ I say; ‘everyone gets off in time here; he’s probably fought a battle by now, and I’ll be bound it isn’t his fault if he hasn’t!’

‘Look here,’ says Binger, ‘I’ve got to go and buy some stores to take up the Benue, will you come?’

‘Pretty hot,’ I reply; ‘anyhow I have to buy some too, so I suppose I’d better go with you.’

‘Do you want to buy a good-looking pony; carry you well?’ shouts out the Colonel to me as he passes.

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'How much, sir?' I reply.

'Fifteen quid.'

'Where is he?' I ask.

'At my stables — if you're going to the Niger Company, you can ride him down, I'll send him over.'

In ten minutes time the gee arrives, saddled, for my trial.

'Coming Binger?' I ask as I mount.

'Where do I come in?' he answers.

'You don't,' I say, 'a good sweat will knock some of that booze out of you.'

Binger and I arrive at the store. I'm hot — but Binger has almost melted.

'Have you ever bought food for six months before?' he asks me. I shake my head.

A thin cheery looking Niger Company clerk from Liverpool greets us.

'Six months' chop,' he says with a knowing look; 'well, the usual I suppose. A case of flour, a case of meat, four dozen soup, four dozen veg., a gross of sardines, three dozen bloaters in tomatoes, two dozen whitebait, two dozen salmon, a dozen lard — them's the essentials. Any tit-bits you can choose for yourselves. Walk round the store, will you? this boy will take down the rest of your order and when we've finished we'll go up aloft for a tiddly.'

'You said "essentials,"' says Binger, 'you never mentioned drink!'

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'Ah,' replies the clerk, 'tastes vary.'

'Let me see,' says Binger, 'six months, roughly a hundred and eighty days, a hundred and eighty bottles of whisky—fifteen dozen—that sounds awful—half that amount of gin—a bottle of Angostura, a case of beer—four dozen—a case of champagne—that should do. What do you think?'

'Rather a lot,' says the clerk, 'why not make it half; you might be dead in three months!'

'Dead,' exclaims Binger, with a horrified expression on his face.

'Well, I should be,' replies the lad from Lancashire 'if I drank half as much in double the time!'

So Binger decides to halve his order and try to make it do six months. I order a case of beer, a case of whisky, a case of gin, and a dozen of 'the boy' and the usual amount of tinned food.

'Are you going to Wushishi?' asks the lad. I nod.

'Capt. Porter has written for a case of whisky, a case of gin and a case of tinned fruit. Will you take them with you?' he asks. I agree.

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Next day the up-river boat is signalled at noon. It brings up the mail from Burutu, stops half an hour, and then steams on to Jebba.

We proceed to the waterside.

I have bought the Colonel's pony and taken on his 'dokie boy.' The stores, cooking pots, kit, cooks,

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'boys' and horses are on board — Dickinson and I say *au revoir* to the 'lads of the village' and thank heaven we are off to the unexpected once more. At the waterside all is bustle. A marine superintendent shouts orders, the never-ending file of carriers bring on board the freight.

Then silence.

The whistle blows a shrill blast. The planks are pushed ashore. The paddle-wheels revolve slowly.

Natives shout to each other.

The marine superintendent waves a farewell salute. We're off!

'Thank God for that,' I say.

## TOWARDS WUSHISHI

THERE is something more than satisfaction when, at the end of a tropical day, one sits in a long chair on the deck of a stern-wheeler up-river bound, facing whatever little breeze there is and watching the sun go down — especially if one is in good cheery company — while the ‘boys’ bring cocktails and anchovy toast.

All seems so peaceful.

It was in these surroundings that Dickinson and I sat and meditated.

Far, far away, we no doubt thought of those at home and the Regiment still on the South African veldt trekking after wily De Wet. What was the future to bring? More fighting? Or merely uneventful bush patrolling? Anyhow, new people, new country, new life, new experience were in front of us.

It is getting dark — there is little twilight in the tropics. We defer lighting lamps till the last — they attract every kind of fly and insect, which appears from nowhere.

The efficient ‘boys’ have done well. Beds have been put up — baths are ready — pyjamas — our dress clothes — are laid out.

## TOWARDS WUSHISHI

Dickinson is a model of moderation. We chat. To-morrow we are to part, he for Jebba in the same craft — while I go Kadunawards with a flotilla of native canoes.

‘I can’t understand,’ says Dickinson, ‘how those chaps at Lokoga keep up the pace. Why do they come out? They can’t save anything.’

‘There are savers and spenders in the world,’ I say, ‘and some people are not out to save — I think war leads to spending — these men save because they can’t help it, and then spend because they’re so damned glad to be alive.’

‘Civilians don’t understand soldiers,’ says Dickinson, ‘they think going to war is like going to business — think what a fuss the ordinary business man would make at being dumped down here to-night!’

‘I’m not looking forward to leaving you to-morrow,’ I say, ‘and being pushed out into the blue with dozens of canoes, tons of stores, dozens of carriers and thousands of pounds of money, a lance-corporal and three men as escort and not knowing a word of the language or the way and no map!’

‘You’ll be all right,’ says Dickinson cheerily, ‘the canoe men know *their* job, leave it to them, the carriers know *theirs*, the N.C.O. knows *his*, just drift along in the clouds and pretend you know everything! How long are you to be on the river?’

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'About five days,' I reply.

'Do nothing except shoot duck and mind the sun. When you start trekking, start at dawn and finish by ten or eleven. Then rest and sleep, and shoot in the evenings. Don't lose your way in the bush alone, always take an orderly.'

'How do you know all this, Major?' I ask. 'You've never been here before either!'

He chuckles. 'I didn't march into Upper Burma for nothing,' he explains, 'it's much the same all over the world!'

'Bath ready, sar,' says my 'boy.'

'Well, I suppose we must dress for dinner,' says Dickinson, as we get up to go to our respective tubs on the other side of the deck.

'I'm nearly driven mad with bites,' I say to my 'boy' as I sit in my bath: 'Look at my back.'

'Him want lemou, sar,' says the 'boy.'

'What's lemou?' I ask.

'Him lime, sar,' is the reply, whereupon, cutting a lime in two, he proceeds to rub my back with the juice. The effect of the lime-juice rubbing is to set up a counter-irritation which is not displeasing.

Tub finished, clothed in pyjamas and a 'coat, British warm,' I saunter over to the corner of the deck which serves as a dining-room. The camp table is set, the table laid. Nippo, Dickinson's 'boy,' brings me a sherry and bitters.

## TOWARDS WUSHISHI

We are just arriving at a small native village to tie up for the night — it is not possible to navigate the Niger in the dark.

Planks are run out. Soon the village is in a hubbub. Our 'boys' land to buy fresh provisions. We eat our 'chop.'

### MENU

Oxtail soup (from a tin).

Whitebait (from a tin).

Roast chicken — one per head, each  
fowl being the size of a pigeon.

Yam — to take the place of potatoes.

Orkraw — a native vegetable.

Banana fritters.

Savoury eggs.

After dinner I write a letter home, as I can post at the hulk at Muraji on the morrow.

'The "boys" are wonderful at turning out something to eat,' I write — 'I have a good cook, trained at Lagos. I predict I shall never want to look at, let alone eat, a banana or a chicken again — they come on at every meal, however it is better than trek-ox on the bush veldt!'

'Boy,' I shout — 'damn these flies' (*sotto voce*) — 'whisky sparklet.'

'I'm going to turn in,' says Dickinson, 'under the mosquito net, it's the only safe place! Good night, old chap.'

## FIVE YEARS HARD

'Good night sir,' I say; 'I'm going to write home, now, in this very letter, for a muslin net ten feet square which I can put over my bed, bath, table and chair — mosquito netting is evidently no good, the sand flies get through the mesh — a muslin room as it were' — I write on —

'Boy,' I shout. The faithful one arrives. 'Put a chop box beside my bed always. On it put glass, lime-juice, whisky, sparklet — understand?' 'Yes, sar.' 'When you've done it you can go to bed, and if I call in night wake up one time.'

'It is astonishing how quickly one picks up the local jargon,' I write in my letter. 'I have only been in the country two minutes and here I am talking to the "boys" of "one time" instead of "at once," "cutleg" instead of "cutlet" and running Hausa words into murdered English!'

Gradually the noise dies down — the chatter ceases — and gives way to snores. Occasionally a dog barks on shore. That makes me think. 'I wonder how old Peter is,' I write, 'he must be sixteen years old now. I fear he'll lose the other eye. [Peter is a faithful and much travelled fox terrier — one of the family.] Next time I'll bring out a smooth-coated dog.' I ramble on — 'To-morrow I'm taking the plunge — off on my own into the bush with over a hundred followers, through country seldom trodden by white feet — until six weeks ago —

## TOWARDS WUSHISHI

and never till last year. The inhabitants were completely hostile to us and entirely dominated by Fulani slave raiders mounted on ponies, who have ruled on tyranny and robbery for centuries — till our advent. Great is the Flag! I have one — a Union Jack to carry in front of me! I have to push through to an isolated outpost on the fringe of the unknown where one white man — Porter — rules. I'm told I shall be able to see the Union Jack on the fort through my glasses an hour before I reach the spot. Good night and God bless you.'

The night is swelteringly hot. I toss and turn but at last sleep comes.

\* \* \*

One always wakes early on a river boat on the Niger. The noise of getting under weigh is sufficient to wake John Peel — but the 'boys' know how to make and bring tea quickly.

'How did you sleep?' calls out Dickinson, who is already up and shaving.

'Very well, thank you, sir.'

'Sleep is the saviour,' says the travelled man. 'Directly that goes look out! Taken your quinine?'

'Not yet,' I say.

'Always make a rule of taking it first thing in the morning with your tea,' he replies, 'then you can't forget it. Make your "boy" hand it to you.'

## FIVE YEARS HARD

At breakfast — which consists of leathery omelette, marmalade and por-por (a delicious melon-like fruit which some think bettered by a sprinkling of lime and sugar, others pepper) — we discuss pidgin-English.

‘D’you notice these chaps can’t pronounce their t’s?’ says the Major. ‘They say “omleg” for omelette, and so on. Here Yakobu — say “epaulet”!’

‘Hoi — har — what be he?’ says Yakobu, pulling a wonderful face. ‘Massa, he want humbug me too much?’

‘Oh no,’ says Dickinson, ‘you know omelette?’ — Yakobu nods — ‘You know cutlet?’ — He nods again — ‘You know gimlet?’ — Yakobu eyes his master suspiciously. ‘Then you know epaulet!’

‘Me no savez, sar,’ says Yakobu impatiently. ‘Me know omleg, me know cutleg, me know what’s this — giemleg — ep-ep — Massa be no humbug more — Yakobu be no fool, he cook, he give you chop, he no want humbug. Me go — Me no go Jebba with Massa he make fool me’ — with which Yakobu turns on his heels in a huff. ‘I don’t think these chaps understand having their legs pulled,’ says the Major, ‘they probably think one is trying to belittle them.’

\* \* \*

At last, before noon, the hulk of Muraji looms in the distance at the junction of the Kaduna River and

## TOWARDS WUSHISHI

the Niger. The Kaduna, now shallow — the season is dry — is in the rains as wide as the Thames at Tilbury; now the sand reaches down to a trickle from either bank and reminds me of the sand at Blackpool. The banks themselves stand out like yellow-green cliffs on the edge of the Sahara. Small temporary fishing villages have sprung up in the sand at the water's edge. Crocodiles sun themselves within easy reach of safety only to make one huge bound into the water if grazed by a .303 bullet. Here and there a crown bird — perched on one leg — or a marabout, or other member of the crane family, stands motionless and erect, watching for some careless fish to provide a dinner. From the water a mirage rises: overhead the sky is as clear as the sun is fierce. Not one cloud, even so little as a man's hand is to be seen — for that one has to wait for several months as the first warning of the approaching rain. One realizes Biblical metaphors in the Soudan. Africa explains the Old Testament — and the New. At the water side, near the hulk, a fleet of native canoes has assembled, the jabber of the canoe-men rising above all other sounds.

Slowly we steam alongside the hulk. A few crisp orders are given in Hausa by the native captain. The white man in charge of the hulk replies. We make fast. My kit is transferred. There is no time to be lost as Jebba has to be reached in schedule

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time. I say good-bye to my friend the Major. We have trekked many a mile together in South Africa; we have steamed up the Niger together. Here we part — almost in solitude. Shall we ever meet again?

As the stern-wheeler moves slowly off up-stream we wave our handkerchiefs to each other till space dims the horizon and the ship becomes a speck.

‘Good fellow?’ asks the hulk storeman as I turn towards the South.

‘One of the very best,’ I reply.

‘Don’t bother about getting your chop things out,’ he says, ‘chop with me. I want to get you away from here by 3 o’clock so that you can get well up the Kaduna before dark. I am expecting the Chief here to-morrow from Jebba and I want all your stuff clear.’

‘Whom d’you call “the Chief”?’ I ask.

‘The High Commissioner, Sir Frederick Lugard,’ he replies — ‘a white man, no fuss or humbug.’

‘I want to ask you several questions,’ I say.

‘Fire away,’ he replies.

‘Firstly, these niggers, how long do they work for, they punt along the side, I suppose, as we do on the river at home?’

‘They pole all day,’ he replies, ‘you set the time for starting — start early — they do the rest. On a moonlight night it is possible to travel all night with a double shift, if there is necessity.’

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'My pony, I see he was landed on the shore —'

'Damn it, man,' he interjects, 'you can't land a horse on a roofed-in hulk and no slings —'

'No,' I agree, laughing, 'I know that, but does he have a canoe to himself?'

'Of course he does,' is the reply, 'your dokie boy sees to all that. Now come and chop. I have an *Ar* cook, he used to be at the Mission at Ibadan — so he's not very honest — they pick up bad tricks there as well as some good ones, but he can cook — you trust the Church to look after "little Mary"!'

We sit down to a white table-cloth.

'I never eat tinned food if I can help it,' says my newly acquired friend.

'Good heavens,' I say, 'and I've brought up "fashions" of it!'

'The Niger Company always make novices take too much,' he says; 'business!'

We have an excellent meal:

Ground Nut Soup.

Curried Eggs and Rice.

Stewed pigeons, sweet potatoes and orkraws.

Mashed bananas and strawberry jam, mixed up with Ideal Milk.

'What will you drink?' asks my host.

I hesitate.

'I don't recommend spirits when the sun is up,' he says. 'What about a bottle of lager?' I agree.

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'I suppose you're going to kick me out now?' I say to my host after lunch.

He shakes his head and smiles.

'Not so bad as that,' he says, 'the sun is at its height, white men should always lie low, if they can, in the middle of the day, and besides, the niggers never work well between 12 and 2. If you ever have to push along by forced shifts, it's best to rest mid-day and carry on later. You and I are going to have a sleep; then, by 3 o'clock, when the sun is going over, we'll have a cup of tea; then you'll find everything loaded up, your own canoe ready and all you have to do is to step in and be off.'

My host is as good as his word. Out of a convoy of some twenty canoes fifteen have already departed when I take my seat for the first time in a dugout. These canoes, the longest of which are about thirty feet long, are simply tree trunks scooped out and roughly shaped. For my use, an awning of mats has been spread over a frame made out of branches. Under this shelter my bed has been erected, and therein I am to sleep for almost a week.

'Your "boy" has put what he requires for your journey — cooking, etc., in the bows; your own kit is in the stern,' says the storekeeper. 'The escort and specie are in the bows as well.'

'I've only one complaint,' I say seriously. The white man looks at me in surprise. 'I had hoped

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to lead the way,' I remark, 'the canoes in front will frighten the crocs and geese and I shan't get a shot.'

'Never mind about that to-day,' he replies, 'the thing is to get under weigh, to-night they will stop at a small village called Kadung Kadung. Push on and stop at the head of the convoy so that in the morning you can start off first. Now off you go. So long — I hope we shall meet when I come out again. I'm due home in three months, so when I return you will be almost due for leave.'

As I step into the canoe I feel another link with the outside world has broken. However, I have papers to read, six weeks old it's true, yet news to me, ammunition, a rifle, a gun, a camera, plenty of food and drink, a new kind of life and an almost unknown people to explore — I am indeed in luck!

On reading in the newspapers that I, with a party of officers, had embarked at Cape Town for Cape Coast Castle, via the Canaries, for service with the West African Frontier Force (in those days only two battalions strong) my father had sent me several books of reference and travel appertaining to the part of the world I was about to visit. As I had been reading these I was, as I sat under the awning of my canoe, not unaware of the fact that I had travelled over 320 miles of the great river from Forcados under vastly different circumstances of comfort and safety

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from that in which the ship *Albert* 'penetrated' to Egga — a few miles from me — on September 28th, 1841 — when she 'had to return' owing to sickness on board!

I was also aware that I was on the vista of a new era in African development which had been fostered by Liverpool merchants ever since Mungo Park first set sail for where I actually was, in 1795 (only to return to England after nearly two and a half years of intense anxiety and fruitless danger) and carried on by giants such as Aberdare, Taubman, Goldie, Wallace and Lugard, after the death of Park at the hands of the natives at Boussa, during his second attempt to solve the riddle of the Niger in November, 1805.

I had always been fired with the ideals of Burton, Barth, Speke and Grant and many a time had I stood as a boy in front of Speke's simple statue, with my father, building castles in the air about the ways I should find to see some part of darkest Africa not now so dark. And here I am 'in it,' I think, as the canoe bends its nose north-east into the Kaduna Reach — yea, and going still farther 'into it' — not as Mungo Park went, with incredible bravery to his death, 'to find the source,' almost alone and quite unsupported, only to be killed a short way from where the Nigerian seat of Government — Jebba — is to-day (1901), — but as part of

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that mighty machine of Britain which appears to have reached the pinnacle of Imperial fame during the honoured old age of Queen Victoria and the succession to the throne of her son.

I had, I thought, grasped the nettle: should I let it go?

In the midst of this reverie I am brought to appreciate my more realistic surroundings by my 'boy' pushing a rifle into my hands and — pointing in the direction of the right bank of the Kaduna — shouting 'Look sar, beef, shoot.'

There, sure enough, some three hundred yards away stands a fine antelope of sorts, about twelve hands high, drinking at a pool under the cliff.

Wind there is practically none, and what there is is favourable — what shall I do? It has not bothered about the noise made by the leading canoes — that is to the good. Three hundred estimated yards is far too long a shot — I must crawl. My mind goes back to Scotland. I'm in khaki, so my camouflage is perfect. Telling the canoes to keep going I jump into the water and wade ashore, throwing myself on my stomach on reaching land. Spotting a narrow channel, now dry, about a hundred yards from the quarry, I decide to make for it in the deer-stalking fashion — back down, head in the sand, now pushing with the elbows now drawing up the knees — a quick performance. Down into the channel, across the

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bottom, up again. I slowly raise my head. He's still there! I push the rifle gradually forward and bending my head, align the sights. I press the trigger. A loud report — he rolls over. Steady. I say to myself, as I reload, there may be another. In the meanwhile, behind me, come wild shouts. The whole canoe population seems to have dashed ashore towards the dead beast in one wild flight. There is no person in the world keener on a kill than an African native!

The head is a good one —by Rowland Ward's book a water buck. I cut it off well down at the shoulders so as to leave the neck intact for stuffing, slip the throat and mask off inside out and hand the body over to the cook. 'For me,' I tell him, 'the heart, kidneys, liver and a haunch — the rest divide between all.'

'What is dis haunch, sar?' he asks.

'Hind leg,' I say; 'but no, I'll have a shoulder — front leg — a hind leg is too much for me and it won't keep.'

There are high jinks at Kadung-Kadung that night — a feed of beef to a native is as good as a morsel of priceless and greasy roast duck to a gourmand — with this difference: in the former case the 'event' is one of sheer and childish enjoyment, in the latter the 'effort' is one of regulated and gluttonous monotony.

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After the feast the head canoe-man is brought to see me, my 'boy' acting as interpreter.

'He say, sar,' says the boy, 'you be berry good man, sar, kill beef so, he say sar all you canoe-men plenty 'trong to-morrow get you quick other side,' which I take to mean that having enjoyed themselves so much they are prepared to do an extra hard day's work to-morrow — 'the other side' being the nearest my 'boy' can get to journey's end. Yet, now, to me, for the first and only time in my life, time is no object!

After doing justice to the water buck's kidneys on toast and a cup of Camp coffee, while smoking my pipe under cover of a mosquito net — we have struck a bad spot for them — my attention is called to the antics of my cook who appears to have gone mad. Perhaps it's the venison I think. Calabash in hand, full of water, which he beats with a stick, he walks up and down near the minute village shouting 'Kwoi' 'Kwoi' 'Kwoi' at the top of his voice.

Whatever he means, I think to myself, it does create an effect, as small children rush to him. Then eggs are placed in the water — the good ones, which sink, being bought; the evil ones, which stink, ride on the water also undefeated — to be saved up for the future in case some innocent white man — unprotected by a knavish cook — should wish to buy eggs while dispensing with the acid test of water!

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'Why do you say "Kwoi, Kwoi, Kwoi"?' I ask the cook.

'He be Hausa for egg, sar,' is the simple reply I receive, which made it all appear pretty obvious and my question slightly feeble.

Crawling into bed under the wigwam in the canoe I am soon asleep, but my luck is out. Awaking halfway through the night I feel an irritation all over, which makes me wish to scratch myself to pieces.

'Have I fallen into an ant's nest?' I say to myself while half asleep. 'Boy, light the lamp.'

On examining myself I find I am a mass of small bites, each bite being a blister. I look at my 'boy' enquiringly. He examined the bites. 'This small jigga,' he says pointing to the grass-matting overhead, 'this live here, he come out bite Batouri (white man), he no bite black man, he savez black man he too 'trong flesh, white man he sweet.'

'Well, what about it?' I ask. 'What can I do? this is hell with a sting in it!'

'Me get lime,' he says, 'me rub Massa all.' He is as good as his word. From head to toes he scrubs me with limes for I am a mass of bites. And, early in the morning, he procures new mats for the shelter and burns the old ones. At frequent intervals for three days I have to submit to this violent lime-scrubbing as it is the only thing available with which to relieve the irritation. These native servants

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are the quintessence of loyalty, and devotion, and as time goes on, I am to find out that without them Nigeria would have been untenable by the white man.

At times — when the stretch of sand permits — I disembark the pony and gallop along or knock a polo ball about for I have brought up sticks and balls for practice.

Thus, with an occasional shot at ducks or crocodiles, and the irritation from the bites growing less — thanks to the care of the 'boy,' we reach Biernin Kieffi where a dump of stores is in existence, under the charge of a white store-keeper.

Biernin Kieffi is a ruin — long before our advent the slaving propensities of the Emirs of Bida and Kontagora and the lesser fry had rendered life there intolerable. Still, with our advent trade revives and people are beginning to come back.

As we approach, a white man greets me from the top of the bank.

'Ave you brought the miles?' he shouts.

'Sorry, no,' I reply.

'Gawd blimey,' he shouts back; 'what the 'ell's the good of 'oppin' up 'ere without the bleedin' post?'

'Anyhow,' I shout up to him, 'I've a case of beer, if that's any good to you.'

'Beer, beer, glorious beer,' he sings; 'but that

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don't take the place of twenty pigs from my Annie Rooney.'

I climb up the steel bank and meet my new acquaintance.

A young man with small black moustache, of medium height and not unpleasant countenance, he stands in his shirt sleeves, helmet on back of head, legs apart, hands thrust into trouser pockets, the complete embodiment of a Cockney Nigerian subordinate Civil Officer of the old days.

'Well,' I say, so as to break the ice and make up for the non-delivery of Annie Rooney's little love letter. 'Is this as good as London?'

He looks at me in astonishment: 'How the 'ell d'you know I comes from Lunnon?' he asks.

'I don't,' I reply untruthfully. 'I only asked "is this as good as London?" because everyone knows London!'

'I bet you,' he says 'I know Lunnon better than any single man in this bloody country, the 'igh Commissioner hincluded. The Helephant, The Aingel, I knows the lot, and you can try me out.'

'Now,' I say, 'look here. I'm going to have my tub. Come over to me in an hour's time after my tent is pitched and have a cocktail and "chop"—and —'

'What about this beer you bucked about?' he asks.

'Yes, you can have that too, and you can also tell me all you know about Lunnon at the same time.'

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'D'you know Lunnon?' he asks.

'I've been there. So long, see you later.'

I felt that had I started on London and beer with 'Enery 'Awkins at 5 p.m., it might have ended in an all-night sitting.

Later, my newly found Cockney friend wends his way over to my tent which had been pitched by the escort.

The beer waits in a cold chatty, the cocktails have been made and only require a swizzle. Dinner is laid for two.

Mr. Henry Smith, for such I find is his name, likes beer better than cocktails but he likes cocktails too and to-morrow is Sunday — a *dies non* — so he mixes. A couple of cold beers, a couple of cocktails. He tells me all about London and Annie Rooney — and then we eat.

The dinner is quite nice — the food entirely fresh, for my gun has been busy and lucky.

After dinner, Mr. Smith wishes to sing, and as I can't stop him I let him sing himself out. More beer! I give up talking.

'Funny lot of —s come through 'ere,' says Smith. 'I gets a dosè of all sorts' — hic. 'My boss — funny old buster' — hic. 'Bottle-a-day man' — hic — 'makes no difference' — hic — 'something from India — beggar to work. "When I calls you" 'e says, "I don't want you to walk — I don't want

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you to run — I want you to bloody well fly.” What about some beer, guvnor?’

Tony, the ‘boy,’ has heard. He pours out a glass of beer which Smith drinks — and collapses.

‘Tell his “boy” to take him away,’ I say as I get up to go to bed. A little later I hear a party carrying Smith home.

Remembering Dickinson’s advice we start early in the morning, and as I put on my putties I ask Tony how Smith got home. ‘He dead man, sar,’ says Tony. ‘Massa wanta go bed, Tony tire, all man tire — we go bush to-morrow. Mister Smith he no go bush, he sleep, he get up when he like — to-morrow God palaver day, Smith no work — Tony he put plenty gin Mister Smith beer — Mister Smith he drink quick, he like, he die. Beer no good make white man drunk quick — white man drink beer he sit up all night make sing ’cos he no get too much drunk. All boys tire. So after little sing Tony he always put gin inside beer then all die.’

‘Well,’ I say, ‘I’m glad I wasn’t drinking beer last night, Tony, or —’

‘Ah,’ cries Tony, horrified beyond words, ‘boy no do that for ’is own Massa.’ A lesson in loyalty!

By the time this interesting disclosure is complete, the tent is down and packed up, my egg flip is finished and one hundred and fifty carriers are ready to start on the word ‘go’ from me.

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I mount my pony and get along the bush path — the Union Jack nailed on to a palm branch in front, the specie escort follows, the rest, carrying my stores, P.W.D. stores, telegraph stores, Waffs stores, file on in turn — I blow the whistle. We're off — the first of my bush marches has begun.

Smith snores loudly as I pass his hut.

British soldiers halt for ten minutes in every hour, as a rule, on the march, because they like it. Carriers, carrying sixty-pound loads, like to get through with the job. So we go straight through, covering eighteen miles in well under six hours, and are bedded down comfortably for the day and night by eleven o'clock.

In the cool of the evening I take a shot and ball gun and, with a soldier, penetrate the bush in search of game. Birds for my own pot and, if possible, 'beef' for the carriers.

A couple of guinea-fowl suffice for my requirements, but we push on after four-footed game. The trouble is lack of local knowledge. If we can find water we can find 'beef'. I notice the grass becomes greener and less rank. Suddenly the soldier behind me touches my arm and points. I see a pair of horns, obliquely through the dense bush, thirty yards ahead. They move — I see a faint outline and fire. There is a shriek — a human utterance! Then all is quiet. Horrified, dumbfounded, we approach the spot where

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the 'animal' fell, only to behold an almost naked man with a bow and arrows slung over one shoulder, a spear beside him and horns on his head — dead?

The soldier, who understands no English, and I no Hausa, look at each other. We examine the body which seems lifeless — and walk back to camp in silence.

But I have been thinking.

Obviously the man was a native hunter camouflaged as a wild but non-ferocious beast — as they rightly thought — the easier to be able to get within arrow shot of the quarry. What should I do? The soldier knew and would no doubt talk — yet it was a pure accident.

There is a very small village near the camp — a mere collection of huts.

During dinner — loosened by a cocktail — I make up my mind.

After dinner I send for the Sariki or king of the 'village.' We exchange salutations. 'Has he a hunter he can lend me?' I ask.

'Yes, he has one but he's out; he should have come back.'

'Tell him,' I say to Tony who acts as interpreter, 'I want him to come with me himself now.'

The Sariki, the soldier, and I march off through the bush, in the moonlight, to where the body lies. Luckily the spot is not far distant.

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I have an object in view, to watch the Sariki's face and bearing when he sees the body. I can then judge whether the dead man is known to him or not.

On arriving at the locality I point to the body. The old man stops and looks at it in amazement. Throwing up his hands he says something I cannot understand. 'What does he say?' I ask.

'He say, sar,' says Tony, 'this dead man be his broder —' 'His *brother*?' I interject, 'he's only a quarter his age.'

'All man be broder here, sar,' says Tony. 'He be great friend — "aboki" we call 'em my country.'

The old man bends down and lifts the dead man's head, saying something.

'He says Devils catch his man 'cos he done bad ting long time go,' says Tony.

'Tell him to come back with me and I'll talk to him,' I say.

We walk back in silence. On arrival at camp I ask the Sariki to sit down on the ground near me. He salaams.

'Tell him,' I say to Tony, 'I shot the man by mistake in the bush; I'm very sorry. I saw the horns on his head and thought he was a "beef." Tony tells him.

'Ah, aha. Mard Allah,' says the old man, roaring with laughter, after which he talks quickly to his followers.

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'What is he saying,' I ask Tony. 'He talk Gwari, I no savez, sar,' says Tony.

'Tell him to tell you in Hausa what he said,' I order. There is great palaver between the old man and Tony.

'He say, sar,' says Tony. 'Thank God, this bad man, he worry glad you kill him, not debil, now he no mind. He no like debil in bush near 'is house!'

'Ask him how I can compensate his family for their loss,' I say.

'I no unerstand you, sar,' says Tony.

'Tell him,' I say, 'I want to pay his family for what I have done. How much does he think is good?'

A lot of talk ensues.

'He say,' says Tony, 'he not got family. This dead man no good man, sar.'

'Well,' I say, 'I'll give a present. What would he like?'

More talk takes up our time.

'He say, sar,' says Tony, 'you give 'im two bottles gin dribe debils away he worry pleased.'

'All right, give him the gin.'

The old man is delighted, and expresses his pleasure by rubbing his head in the dust repeatedly while repeating over and over again words which were, to me, double-Dutch.

A little later while in bed I hear great shouting and

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noise from the direction of the native huts. The rout of the devils, I think to myself!

Next morning we prepare for an early start, but, before leaving, the Sariki comes to me with Tony. 'What does he want?' I ask. 'He looks ill.'

'He say, sar,' says Tony, 'his broder "pass" two bottles gin, devils want more.'

'This means,' I say to Tony, 'having discovered the inferiority of Plymouth gin he has discovered that his friend is worth more than a couple of bottles!'

'I no savez what you say, sar,' replies Tony.

'All right,' I say, 'I understand. Taking a packet of Epsom salts out of my tin box I hand it to Tony who smiles.

'You tell him,' I say, 'this "pass" all gin if he puts it in one calabash of water now and drinks all to-night no devils will come near him and in two days' time he will be as fit as a fiddle!'

Tony interprets this injunction — or says he does. Obviously unconvinced and suspicious, the old man accepts the salts but there is no head-in-dust salutation this time! What happens later history does not relate!

Subsequently I found out that I was doing an entirely unlawful thing in giving a native spirits to drink at all!

In the evening I go out shooting again and strike a swamp. Ducks — never before have I seen so

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many ducks on the wing or water at the same time, never since have I killed so many with four barrels. They hover round darkening the sky, returning again and again — the gun holds no terror for them, they know no fear.

At last, one morning, at ten o'clock, I see the Fort of Wushishi in the distance on the skyline. Through my glasses I see the Union Jack fluttering in the river breeze.

The first trek is over; there are more to follow.

Porter, mounted, meets me on the parade ground and shakes my hand.

'I hope you've brought some clothing and money for the men,' he says, 'they're in rags.'

But no man is in such rags as he!

'I've a job for you,' says Porter. 'I'm off shooting. There's a flogging parade this evening, you might take it, the colour-sergeant will tell you all about it. It should be done by an officer.'

'Me to flog the man myself!' I exclaim.

'No, of course not,' he replied, 'the white colour-sergeant lays it on, and, if there isn't one, then a native N.C.O. It's simple!'

'What's the fellow done?' I ask.

'Oh, he's always dirty and is an incorrigible fellow and gave the colour-sergeant some lip.'

That evening I see my first flogging.

Laid out flat on the ground — naked — the arms

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held by one man — the legs by another, the colour-sergeant 'lays on' twelve of the best, while I count each stroke as it cuts through the skin.

'I don't know how he stuck it without screaming,' I say to the colour-sergeant after the performance.

'He's a Hausa, sir,' he replied. 'Wait till you wallop a Yoruba! he'll shout the roof off!'

## AMONG THE PAGANS

It is as well to glance briefly at the Fort of Wushishi.

Made of sun-dried mud, it is surrounded by a wall high enough to shoot over. In front is a deep ditch filled with sharp stakes pointing 'towards the enemy.' Made some eighteen months ago, before the subjugation of Bida and Kontagora it had been an outpost in rear of the enemy, isolated, self-contained and nominally held by a company of infantry with two Maxim guns. But, as the infantry were partly mounted on captured ponies and therefore constantly on the warpath, far away, the garrison for defence, in case of attack was seldom more than fifty carbines strong plus the Maxims.

The Fort, I see, is well chosen for defence. On the edge of a steep cliff which juts out into a nose, overlooking the Kaduna river, it is, in fact, absolutely secure on three sides, while the southern face, although exposed, dominates a natural glacis running down to the old town wall some three hundred yards away. Troublesome dead ground there is none, within range, while no considerable body of

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men could assemble within striking distance without being seen.

Oblong in shape and containing an adequate supply of water, food, and ammunition, it is impregnable, provided relief arrives within thirty-five days, the margin of safety governed by considerations of water and food.

Below the cliff, and between it and the river, are the men's lines, made of grass, built above high water mark but vulnerable from the point of view of accidental burning.

The arms and equipment are kept in the Fort.

Porter, I find, lives in the Fort in a round grass-roofed mud hut, while outside are two others, one of which is allocated to me.

The parade ground, about five hundred yards to the SSW is merely a bush clearing.

The Wushishi I see on arrival is a far different Wushishi from what Porter and his merry jabbering men first set eyes on a year previously. The fall of Bida and Kontagora, the defeat of Paiko — an inveterate, tyrannical and cruel slave raider — and the freedom afforded by Porter's presence to such big places as Mai-Kum Kaillie, Minna and Bernin-Gwari and a host of small villages, has revived trade, encouraged the planting of crops and begun to bring security to the land.

So, too, the slave-raiding and pillaging expeditions,

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organized by the Fulani from such far-off places as Kaduna and Zaria, have (owing to the presence of the British) now stopped short of Wushishi.

The Fulani tyrants have more than met their match.

The small town of Wushishi had, owing to years of raiding from all sides, practically ceased to exist. The mud wall, about five thousand yards in circumference, had survived, and many of the mud houses and compounds were in a fair state of repair, but all signs of life had long since disappeared.

Now, I am told, owing to security, never known before, people are returning.

In another direction too, things have improved. From Kano, the Fulani stronghold and great trading centre and manufacturing city of 'Morocco' leather, huge caravans of merchandise consisting of skins, saltpetre, corn, native cloth, leather, ostrich feathers and nuts, journey yearly north, south and west, and are exchanged for salt, Kola and Manchester goods, across the Desert in the Mediterranean ports and beyond the pagan belt on the coast of the Southern Atlantic Ocean.

Up to last year Bida, Kontagora and smaller fry levied tribute on the travellers for safety they never received, while bandits looted and killed as they could. Now all is changed. Safety reigns. If a merchant from Kano can make Wushishi, he's safe for the rest of his long journey.

## AMONG THE PAGANS

In travelling up from Biernin Kieffi I had marched through the country of the Gwari pagans without knowing it. The pagan belt, which roughly skirts the left bank of the Niger till immersed in the Delta swamps, had blocked the way and prevented Fulani penetration towards the sea, partly because of the dense bush, but also on account of the fly which takes great toll from horses. The Fulani leader is essentially a mounted tyrant.

I cull this information from Moffatt, a Scotch doctor, on the night of my arrival. Porter tells me he is due home for leave and that he expects speedy relief for himself and his company which has been exposed to hardship in the field for over a year of incessant fighting in all seasons, without rest.

‘What I want you to do is to take my fellows on the parade ground and drill them silly. We’ve been too busy keeping order and creating law to bother about anything else,’ says my new skipper, before we turn into bed.

Across the ravine to the south-west I discover all kinds of construction work in progress as I ride over next morning to see the chief foreman about a case of theft by Lagos carpenters. This white man is quite a character, I am told. An inveterate ‘coaster,’ a bottle-a-day man, it is alleged he has never been seen under the influence of drink.

Possessed of a native harem and a wife in Scotland,

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he apparently manages to play the game to both sets of complications and contradictions and to satisfy the Government in addition, for he is a hard worker and reliable subordinate if nothing else.

As I approach him he scans me with a gimlet eye.

'New?' he asks in answer to my morning salutation. I nod.

'I want four hundred labourers in ten days' time,' he says, 'food to keep them over the remainder of the dry season — three months — and material for their huts.'

'Where are you going to get it from?' I ask.

'Look here, young man,' he says, 'let me give you a bit of advice! Don't ask damned silly questions! Get on with the job. There is no civilian bloke here yet, thank God. So far, Porter has run the whole show on bluff and bounce. We are pushing a light railway through from here to Zunguru this year, fifteen miles of the first railway in Nigeria — don't forget it! The track is not even surveyed yet, but my boss is coming up to do that. I guess he'll pace it out on his flat feet by himself. But what the hell's the good of him doing all that if we haven't got the labour? Porter's going home. You'll be here. Get me what I ask for; don't ask me *how* to get it. Get it — pinch it — force it — pray for it — bribe it — persuade it (with a bayonet). Anything

## AMONG THE PAGANS

you like, but damned well get it quick and stand no nonsense from the bloody niggers!’

‘Anyhow,’ I reply, ‘I’ve come over about two of your men stealing — what about that?’

‘How much did they take?’ he asks.

‘One pound,’ I reply, ‘but they’re going to be flogged as well.’

‘Now look here, young’un,’ says the old man, boiling up, for he is old to me — *Forty!* ‘Any flogging there is to be done here *I do*. Feel this muscle (he tightens up his arm where an orange-shaped protuberance makes its appearance). I don’t flog for small stuff. Here’s your quid (he hands over ten two shilling pieces) but if you think you’re going to flog my two best carpenters, you’re darned well mistaken. They’d bolt. Buzz off and get me my stuff.’

‘I’m very sorry,’ I say, ‘I didn’t mean to annoy you.’

‘Annoy me!’ says the burly old ruffian, ‘Annoy me! . . . Only one man ever did that.’

‘What happened to him?’ I ask.

‘*Happened?*’ he replied. ‘Nothing! He just died!’

‘Queer fellow,’ I say to myself as I trot back to breakfast, ‘but I have no doubt he knows his job.’

Porter is out shooting across the river, but Moffatt is in high delight at breakfast, which consists of tinned sausages from Fortnum and Mason’s, cold reed buck and warthog cheek, washed down with

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tea — Moffatt prefers beer which he has not tasted for six months.

'A runner has just come in to say 'C' Company will be relieved by 'G' under Bung who brings up Mock Turtle, a section of guns under Rosher *and*, mark you, *and* a ruddy doctor, Lobb, to take the place of yours obediently!'

'What about me?' I ask.

'Oh, you have a priceless job — you're to stay on to look after the M.I. but as all the horses will be dead before long you'll have nothing to do!'

Horse-sickness is rampant and there is no cure. The 'fly' is no discriminator between natives: it kept the Fulani from reaching the Coast; it will take heavy toll of us before the Hausa states are conquered.

'When do they arrive?' I ask.

'In a week's time,' he answers.

The next few days are spent by the Company in preparing to move, with one hour of steady drill to wake them up in the morning.

Porter collects his heads and skins and birds for stuffing at Rowland Ward's. A very fine specimen of crown bird catches my eye. 'If you go and see my people when you get home,' he says, 'you'll see this fixed up as a standard lamp!'

In due course the relief arrives and Porter departs.

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Bung, Rosher, Mock, the Doctor and I make up the Military party — with a British colour-sergeant, Gay. Yet a new element has been introduced.

James, a Varsity man and Coon-Can banjoist has come up with the party to take up the new post of Assistant Resident, a political job. There is lots for him to do, but unfortunately he does nothing instead.

Meanwhile the foreman across the ravine has been spluttering fire and brimstone because his labour has not arrived.

‘What can you expect from a bloody man,’ he says, ‘who because he is called a Resident thinks he has nothing else to do except *reside*? He won’t go round his district. He can’t get me labour. He sings and plays the banjo all day. I’ve sent a message to my boss to-day to get him the sack.’

‘What have you said?’ asks Rosher.

‘Here’s a copy . . . it’s confidential . . . don’t tell James I showed you . . . read it out, young’un.’

I read out —

‘Doodle, Jebba,

‘Respectfully inform you if you wish the railway through this year get James out of it and let Bung, who isn’t much to look at, do the job. He does get things done, knows the nigger, likes beer and doesn’t play the banjo.

‘Rabbit.’

‘Why Rabbit?’ I ask.

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‘Mind your own bloody business,’ he replies, ‘they say I’m always nibbling.’

\* \* \*

Rabbit got his way all right, and with the exit of James much work of an interesting character falls on our shoulders.

One evening at cocktail time we are all sitting in a circle outside Bung’s hut. He has just heard of his appointment as acting Resident, which duty he is to carry out in addition to his military duty as O.C. Troops. James has been ordered to report elsewhere. Rabbit has been raging louder for labour. The rains are approaching.

‘Bull pup,’ says dear old Bung to me, ‘the Gwari country has never been patrolled for months — James wouldn’t let us go out for fear of disturbing the people! I’ll be bound Paiko has been at it again raiding on the quiet! Rabbit must have two hundred men at once for the railway and food for five hundred for three months. We want guinea corn for the gees, and the men can’t buy food in the market as there is none. I want you to start to-morrow with all your M.I. which will ease the forage situation here. Go to Bernin-Gwari and round behind the hills to Paiko and back by Minna and Mai-Kum-Kaillie. Take as long as you like over it. Interview every Sariki, or headman, of every village you pass through.

## ON THE MARCH



*Above* : A Camp in the Desert.

*Below* : Halt for lunch on patrol. (Note the author's fox-terrier).



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Ask if he has any complaints, and, if he has, settle them if you can. Tell him there's a new Judge here who is going round the country soon, on tour. Be very nice to them all. Then, when you get round to Mai-Kum-Kaillie double back and see them all again and ask them for labour — divide it out as you find necessary — a yard of cloth a day per head will be paid once a week to the headmen's representatives. Then also collect all the food, guinea corn, yams and gero you can lay your hands on and requisition it on payment — market prices at Wu-shishi. Send this food and labour in under escort from time to time, otherwise the slaves may get frightened and run away or dump their loads. You will have to sketch the road on a cavalry sketching-board. All clear?'

'Right ho!' I reply.

'Arrange your carriers with the colour-sergeant,' he says.

At 8 a.m. next day my party, headed by a Union Jack and a bugler, starts off from the parade ground. Next in order rides my orderly, carrying my sporting rifle as well as his own carbine, followed by my spare carrier carrying my gun and ammunition. Next march a sub-section of M.I. in single file, mounted, followed by my cook who is in charge of the five carriers (two for the tent, one for bath and kit inside bath in wicker carrier, one for cooking pots,

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etc., one for 'chop') and a spare horse, led. The remaining forty mounted men bring up the rear.

Sergeant-Major Dundara, D.C.M., a hero of a hundred fights, is second in command of the column and regulates the halts under my orders.

Saying *au revoir* to all I gallop after the column and take my place at its head behind the flag and bugler.

The sketching of the road is not difficult, a shot every quarter of an hour and an inch plotted off on the board denotes a mile of progress. And so we jog along till we reach Bernin-Gwari, sixteen miles distant, at half-past twelve. We halt for lunch.

'Massa no sleep here to-night, this good place?' says Tom, the interpreter, who, obviously, has had enough. I shake my head. My desire is to get into the wilds as soon as possible.

'Tell the sergeant-major,' I say, 'we start again three o'clock and march to Kurumin-Zakie, four hours' march.'

The Sariki has little to say. His people often go to Wushishi now. He has a crop of guinea corn stored in the hills. Leaving it at that, I wish him *au revoir* politely.

We resume our march on the bugler sounding the 'Fall in,' followed by the 'Advance.'

On either side of the winding bush path the vegetation is dense. Too dense for real M.I. work.

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The fascination of guessing the nearness of a village from signs on the ground is immense. Sometimes one debouches into cultivated country — surely there must be a village near! No! It must be an outlying farm. Perhaps there is a secret shelter and mud granary inside the bush, built in the days of raiding and thieving! There is a small rocky hill on the left, obviously a small village crowns the summit. Dundara gallops out to reconnoitre. No . . . an empty granary, a sign of the times of havoc recently subdued.

Now a large clearing — here and there a few fine trees. Surely a village now. No . . . a one-time field of guinea corn.

Ahead of us lies a rocky hill, standing alone. Height — about three hundred feet. Scrub grows in the cracks and crannies.

‘Kurumin-Zakie, I’ll be bound,’ I think, my limited knowledge of Hausa telling me Kurumi means Hill — ‘What’s Zakie mean?’ I ask Tom.

‘He lion, sar,’ he replies.

‘Why a *he* lion only?’ I ask.

‘Ah, ah,’ answers Tom in his irritated manner, when misunderstood. ‘He be lion sar, not Fadder only, Modder too, he be all two.’

We pass a mud wall at the foot of the hill but there is no sign of life. The gates of the wall are non-existent and rank vegetation fills the moat. Once

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inside however, the path takes a right twist among what used to be a furrowed field and continuing round the curve of the hill leads directly to some mud huts nestling among huge rocks.

In front is an open space shorn of grass and shaded by a big tree. Underneath old men sit and smoke long pipes. Kurumin-Zakie!

The men and carriers file in and dump their loads automatically on the open space. Dundara takes the horses off to water after which he dresses the picketing pegs. Picketing forty horses is no joke in Nigeria, as all are stallions and all kick and savage each other if allowed.

Each horse must be picketed out of kicking distance of his neighbour. The picketing consists of driving an eighteen inch stake into the ground — buried — to which is attached a gindi or heel rope. A tiresome job.

We have covered twenty-eight miles quickly — the next thing is a tub, pyjamas, a drink and dinner.

In a surprisingly short space of time the men and carriers are busy cooking while my tent has also been pitched and water heated.

I had shot a couple of bush fowl, a sort of partridge, for the pot, during the march. One of these, roasted, with yams and native spinach, constitutes my dinner, the other, cold, will serve to-morrow's lunch.

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After dinner, with whisky and soda on the camp table at my side, consumed with a feeling of contentment, derived from exercise and natural reaction, I send for the Sariki.

‘Give him a glass of gin, Tom,’ I say. ‘It will make him friendly.’

Despite the law which regulated to the contrary and in ignorance of it, I often prefix my remarks to kings and other notables of small villages with a drop of gin (‘mother’s ruin’) when I want anything; it works wonders!

This old man is very old indeed.

‘Ask him how it is he has never been taken away as a slave?’ I enquire.

‘He say, sar,’ says Tom, ‘he run for bush plenty time when he be yaro (young boy) they no catch him. Then he go work Zaria long time ago mind donkeys for caravan. One day Paiko he catch caravan near river.’

‘Which river?’ I ask.

‘Kaduna — Paiko pull ’im prisoner so he work long time. Then he come here work as barwar for King Paiko.’

‘What’s barwar?’ I ask.

‘He slave,’ says Tom, ‘when he get too old work hard Paiko leff ’im lone . . . now Paiko finish, he too king ’cos he old pass all an’ live here plenty long pass all.’ (I think it best not to repeat my

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little joke about the 'he' and the 'she' of it, as obviously Tom is lost without his pronoun in the third person, singular, masculine.)

'So King Paiko gets the sack,' I say, 'and our friend becomes king of Kurumin-Zakie. Tell him I hope he be better king than King Paiko!'

As Tom interprets this there is a loud chorus of laughter. No doubt the gin had helped.

'Ask him if he has any troubles to tell me about,' I say to Tom, 'and tell him that the great White King who gave me that flag to show to the king of Kurumin-Zakie will be very glad when I tell him that all is well in Gwari.'

The interpretation of this remark calls forth great manifestations of respect and humiliation. 'It is wonderful,' I think, 'what a drop of gin will do!'

He has no worries (he is lucky); he has planted his crops and soon hopes to harvest them . . . there are now no thieves around as there used to be, or slave traders at Bida and no slave market nearer than Zaria . . . hence no slave raiders. Allah has been good to him in his old age. 'Yes,' I say, 'tell him Allah sent the King's soldiers to rescue his country from misery.'

And so to bed.

For a week this triumphant procession goes on, the marches averaging only eighteen miles a day,

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so as to allow more time at each village in which to see and hear things for myself.

The problem of getting labour — which must be forced — and food supplies, is manifestly difficult.

There is no central authority to approach. At large cities such as Bida, in which the Emir holds sway over city and outlying territory alike, things are easier, but in the Gwari country — where primitive paganism thrives beneath the veneer of Fulani culture, each village appears to be a law unto itself. Moreover, no native likes working far away for an unknown white man under new conditions, on a job he does not understand. What must a pagan Gwari think of a railway train and trucks, or a steam engine which goes by itself on railway lines? Fish plate sleepers to be fixed to the track! What are they? These the Gwari cannot visualize as he does not even know about them. He has yet to see a wheel and an ox-drawn cart! He has still to walk along a modern road, yea, even a cleared track.

Is he not by nature, climate and inclination lazy, too? Does he not merely have to scratch the soil to live? Can he not build a house out of mud with the sun to help him and grass to protect him from that same sun's rays and the rain? No wonder he reverences the sun! Does it not give him all he needs? 'Why should I?' he says, 'work hard for these mad

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men now — does not my old proverb tell me “Men of old sat down here — working not — worrying over nothing — just eating”!’

These and other difficulties I encounter.

I had sent a runner to Wushishi asking for the loan of Moffatt’s musical box, gramophone and records as I realize that before much could be accomplished in the realm of labour recruitment an impression should be made on the minds of these simple folk. I intend to give musical recitals at each village and wake them up.

The musical instruments — if such they may be heretically called, for brevity — duly arrive and at Gidda Lafia I make my first experiment.

A ‘wee drapie’ may help! The king receives his privileged portion. He licks his lips and thanks his maker! . . . not me!

The villagers, some completely naked, the young, the old, the hunters, the farmers, mothers, daughters, grandmothers, new born babes, none wearing more than a goat’s skin, some a few beads, all fearful (save the king, now fortified) assemble. I notice each man carries a bow and quiver full of arrows, while some, in addition hold a hoe. All wear leather ju-ju charms round the neck or waist.

Some two hundred in all assemble. Tom plays his part well . . . at least I presume he does, as I am entirely in his hands.

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'Tell them,' I say, 'the great white King will sing to them himself from this box.'

There is a murmur of astonishment.

I wind up the gramophone slowly — the record is already in position. They look on, amazed.

All eyes are gaping. The king asks for stimulants which he receives. All seem uneasy and perturbed.

'Tell them,' I say, 'I have just ground the guinea corn for the great white King to eat . . . soon he will sing.'

More murmuring — a few timid people edge off. 'Tell them not to be afraid,' I say to Tom, 'when the Great White King sings he brings plenty good to all man.'

Suddenly I turn the musical box on softly with my left hand — unobserved — all eyes are on me. 'Tell them,' I say, 'the King comes soon, his music men play.' A soft rendering of 'Home Sweet Home' appears to calm the crowd . . . and . . . when it stops, I instantly jump up from my chair and stand at attention.

'Tell them,' I say to Tom, 'the great White King comes.'

All sit like stone statues . . . afraid to be afraid, unable to be bold.

Then, again, unseen, I switch on the gramophone. I salute. The flag is lowered. I kick Tom's ankle

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hard to remind him of his previously rehearsed but now forgotten part — to place his hand in front of his eyes with bowed head, glancing towards the sound, as if to shade the eyes from the penetrating rays of a silvery voice.

Tom hates making a fool of himself! but he does as I wish . . . with no good grace!

'I knows a little donah,' in Albert Chevalier's sweet clear voice carries far across the African bush. It's rather a damned shame I think!

Some are spell-bound, all are thunderstruck.

Gradually, one by one, the more timid slink off from the back of the audience in the same way as society folk used to leave Dr. Mommery speaking to the empty seats at the Queen's Hall after he had given them a good dressing down in the 'nineties. Then panic comes. I change the record to Haydn Coffyn's 'Queen of my Heart' . . . that's too much for them!

With a shrill cry the head huntsman and leader of the fighting squad turns to the audience and shouts orders. There is a headlong rush — only the old king remains, and he can't walk! The fighting squad gradually withdraws, the men fingering their bows. I don't like it. Some of those arrows are no doubt poisoned!

'Tell them to come here,' I say to Tom. He shouts but they take no notice whatsoever.

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The crowd has melted. I call for a whisky and sparklet and sit down to think.

What will be the reaction? A general exodus, lost labour, suspicion, ill will? — or a triumph? Might they take me for a bad evil agency and kill me?

I tell Tom to collect my carriers and Dundara to fall in the men — unarmed. Collecting them round me, as an audience, with a goodly supply of tobacco, fou-fou (a native dish), and kola nuts, I hold another concert while I drink beer and the 'English King' sings to the other who sips!

Gradually the Gwari bush-men come back as slowly as they first melted before the rush and listen from afar. They come nearer and nearer. We take no notice.

Within two hours confidence has been restored and the whole village population sit spell-bound once more.

Whether they thought me God or Devil I never did discover, but it worked, and thanks to Edison, much labour and food speeded in to help build the first railway track in Nigeria.

Only Paiko stuck out, and he came round.

Hearing I had the voice of a devil with me in a box and not believing it, he said I should be destroyed for telling lies. Hearing I was conscripting labour and commandeering supplies he sent me an impudent message as I approached his town.

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'Tell the messenger,' I say to Tom, 'to tell his master not to be silly, I shall reach his main gate when the sun is half way up to-morrow morning and I shall expect him to be there to receive me. I rule.'

My trouble is that I am not supposed to fight unless attacked — if I do I may be sent home.

'What's to be done?' — I think — 'I can't let this message stand as it is.'

Of course I can say I was attacked, I think, I can say Paiko fired first — he probably will — but I don't want to set light to a huge fire now — we haven't the men and we want to build the railway — yet I can't allow him to send rude messages. Thus I muse. I make my mind up.

We are two hours' 'trot-walk' from Paiko. The country is now fairly open. I shall leave my baggage here with three soldiers as guard, tent pitched, as if nothing has happened. With the remainder of the men I shall ride to Paiko at midnight and secure each gate — of which I am told there are four.

This accomplished, I force open a side gate and ride with six soldiers and Tom into the town through cultivated fields and narrow passages.

Pieko is not a large town, but, like all such hybrid places, the population being Fulani and Hausa mixed with a strong strain of Gwari paganism; most of the living houses are on high ground, overlooking the approaches.

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Entering the first dwelling encountered, amidst the barking of dogs, a danger I had feared, I kick a sleeping slave and cover him with my revolver while Tom tells him to shut his mouth or take the consequences. The man is terrified.

Tom explains that we wish him no harm, and if he does as he is told and keeps quiet he will receive a reward if he leads us direct, by the quickest way, to where the king sleeps.

He immediately rises and we follow.

At the king's 'palace' — a collection of mud huts facing inwards, in a circle so as to form an outer wall with more huts in the centre and only one with a door facing outwards as well as inwards which serves the dual purpose of entrance and waiting-room for visitors — I place two soldiers, back to back, with loaded rifles and orders not to let anyone out or in. 'Lead on,' I say.

The element of surprise is a valuable weapon in the soldier's armoury in war — and, if Paiko wants war, I think to myself, we have the initiative and he gets the surprise. He did. We find him asleep among his women, who shriek. I cover him while Tom instantly tells him we are really friends — but — if he wishes to be otherwise the fault is his.

Paiko is wise — he listens.

'Tell him,' I say to Tom, 'I only do this in this way because he sent me a bad impudent message.'

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The soldiers of the King of England don't want to hurt him or his people — we want to help — but we won't stand impudence.'

Paiko talks in Hausa to Tom but I stop the conversation.

'He say, sar,' says Tom, 'Mai Fadda (the native name for Capt. Porter, meaning 'the fighting man') he done plenty bad ting to Paiko — Paiko he angry.'

'You tell him,' I say, 'Mai Fadda was stopping slave raiding and now the Emir of Bida has also been broken . . . next it's Zaria's turn, then Kano and Sokoto and all the other big places. Does Paiko want to be sent away across the seas?'

Tom says Paiko has no desire whatever to go away from Paiko.

'Then tell him,' I say, 'he must behave.'

'He say, too,' says Tom, 'he no like 'em musik.'

'Tell him the town is captured, anyone trying to leave will be shot. Tell him to beat his own music, play his drums and sound his horns. . . .' (I stoop down and clap the handcuffs on his wrists) 'and to assemble his people at the palaver tree in the market and he and I will go and talk there before them.'

Paiko gives some orders which Tom says are all right. Soon the drums beat out. The horns sound and resound among the rocks. The people collect.

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They see their king in his handcuffs escorted by soldiers with fixed bayonets.

Meanwhile the detachments at the gates converge by prearranged signal and surround the houses and market. Paiko sees this — I take good care he does.

When all is set I advance to the centre with Paiko, chained.

'Is it peace or war?' I say to him in English. Tom interprets quickly.

'He say, sar, it be peace,' says Tom.

'Do you know what treachery is?' I say to Tom in low tone.

'Me no savez, sar,' says Tom.

'If I let Paiko go now and he comes back and kills me or anybody belonging to me after he has said "peace", that's treachery,' I say.

'I understand,' says Tom.

'Then it is peace,' I say to Paiko in English, which Tom translates word by word. 'I now set you free if you promise to help me always.'

He promises . . . he swears on the Koran to be the friend of England and on his sword blade to fight for her.

While unlocking 'the bracelets,' I say to Tom, while looking at the copper-coloured chief dressed in a flowering Hausa gown but untied turban, his toilet having been hasty: 'If you or any of your people, at any time, are *treacherous* to the King of

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England, his troops, or his friends, you will die by the sword, the gun and fire — your houses will be burnt, your crops destroyed. Paiko will be as flat as this market-place, if you do.'

He nods his head — 'But,' I add, 'if you be friendly you prosper.'

'Now,' I say to Tom, 'tell him to tell his people now, and see he does it, and tell him to tell all his people to bow down to the flag.'

Paiko tells them, when they practise humility as ordered.

'Tell Paiko,' I say to Tom, 'I am going to stay in his country for some days, near the water. I want him to come and see me every morning to talk business. I also want him to tell me where all the "beef" and duck are to be found.'

\* \* \*

So, by degrees, amity and confidence is built up between the pagans of the bush and the new British rule.

Labour pours into the railway track and a primitive people begin to learn the value of English silver and Manchester cloth.

I return to Wushishi, and later, revisit Paiko and other pagan places during the rains. Then, for comfort, I occupy their houses at night, as the rain is torrential at times.

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Deep, dry, rocky watercourses become foaming torrents within an hour. The grass grows twelve feet high in places. But the construction work is pushed through to a successful conclusion . . . thanks to Paiko and his fellow men . . . the slaves and the slave-raiders of a year ago!

\* \* \*

Life at Wushishi is uneventful.

'I believe,' says Moffatt, the medical officer, one afternoon while sipping a cup of tea, 'these wretched market people at Wushishi would clear out from the market, in panic, and leave all their stuff behind, if one solitary Kano horseman rode in amongst them, alone, in full war kit through the Kano gate, so great is their fear.'

Turtle disagrees, he thinks they'd kill him.

'We'll settle it,' I say, 'at once. I bet you a theatre and a supper at the Savoy for two, Turtle, that they'd all bolt. I'll put my full Hausa war paint on. I've got a complete set, gown, sword, trousers, turban, saddle, saddle cloth, bridle, bit, stirrups — the whole bag of tricks. I'll be there in half an hour, don't say a word. Doctor, you saunter into the market and act as umpire.'

'It's rather a joke,' says the Doctor.

'Yes,' I say, laughingly, 'particularly if they turn round on me as Turtle apparently believes they will!'

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'Right,' says Turtle, 'I'll take the bet, if you take the risk.'

\* \* \*

'It was rather a damned shame,' says the Doctor that night at cocktail time, 'talk of panic . . . that's not the word.' He laughs heartily. 'They left every damned thing they had for sale. They knocked down the shelters in their frantic rush. Bung, you, as Resident, must go and look at the place! It looks as if there had been a hurricane!'

'And all,' I say, 'because one solitary Kano warrior appeared as if from the blue, in their midst!'

'It only shows,' put in Bung, 'what a hell of a time Kano used to give them.'

'I trust they won't all bolt in the same way at Kano when we get there,' I say, 'I want a show!'

\* \* \*

The last three months pass quickly in a new place — Bida. There I am monarch of all I survey in the military sense.

And then down river . . . Lokoga. . . . The *Empire* (a stern-wheeler) in which we are almost wrecked . . . we run on a rock but escape while steaming hard for another 'Empire' in Leicester Square where we may run on the rocks completely.

The buglers sound 'Watta Rana' . . . the Hausa

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farewell . . . followed by the general salute . . . given ungrudgingly by those good fellows left behind to those about to see Home once more . . . as the *Empire* steams ahead . . . for everyone hopes to escape a Nigerian grave.

And then Merrie England . . . iced beer on the boat . . . boiled shirts . . . a London Season . . . Ascot . . . frocks and frills . . . Lord's and Henley . . . all made possible only by Paiko and the pagans! But adventure is not quite over. When a dozen or so officers, fresh from the fight, are on board ship and among them is one white woman, of equal freshness, with a husband left behind among the Mangos and a heart susceptible to environment and shock . . . competition is liable to be rife . . . particularly if the lady has once lived and learnt in India . . . the home of broken vow and shattered maidenhood. And this voyage proved no exception to the rule—'Love's licence Neptune suspends' . . . so far but no farther depends on safety. The lady was certainly lovely . . . and fair. A guardsman made the running . . . all seemed lost . . . the Grenadier was cocksure . . . too sure.

In the smoking room late that first night conversation turned on the lady in the case, and it was conceded that the gay Grenadier held the field. There was a Colonial Governor on board, and, as the ship neared the Canaries the captain and the

## FIVE YEARS HARD

Governor were seen pacing the deck, engaged in earnest conversation . . . while behind a life-boat sat the Grenadier and his lady.

'But, your Excellency, although the captain of the ship and in supreme command, I can't compel a passenger — even if he is an officer under your jurisdiction on shore . . . to go to bed at 10 o'clock and remain in his cabin all night' the skipper was heard to say, as he glanced slyly at the lady as he passed.

'Well, will you keep the coast clear and your hounds on the look out if she comes to my cabin for the night?' replied the Governor.

'I'll see what I can do,' promised the skipper.

The subalterns had also heard parts of the conversation and concluded that some fun was on the *tapis*.

By general consent the Grenadier had been allowed free access — unrestricted — to cabin No. 69 . . . now the situation was changed. His Excellency the Governor appeared to have forced an entry into a peaceful scene. All may be fair in love and war, thought the young soldiers, but for a jolly old Governor to barge in where a Grenadier could only tread seemed asking too much.

They watched.

That night, when all was quiet, a lightly clad female swiftly slid from 69 to 96 and disappeared.

## AMONG THE PAGANS

The Governor's state cabin afforded room for two.

'I tell you what we'll do,' said Tait of the Tenth, 'the bath room is unlocked; one of us can get through and listen, then, if they appear to be asleep we can put red paint on each of their faces and see if they have washed it off by breakfast time . . . if they discover whoever goes in they can't say anything!'

It was agreed to.

At breakfast, next morning, the captain noticed that His Excellency had a red patch of paint on his left ear, which had escaped the sponge and that 'my lady' had a red streak on her neck. The Grenadier, who sat at the captain's table noticed the Governor's red brand too, and examined it minutely through his eye glass. He also noticed the lady's mark.

'Funny mark you've got on your ear, your Excellency,' remarked the Guardsman . . . 'and you, too, Mrs. Coote, funny mark on your neck.'

The captain looked to his front.

The subalterns remained out for mischief, as it was evident that Mrs. Coote was greedy.

'Funny mark you've got on your ear, Prior,' remarked the Governor, next morning at breakfast, 'and you, too, Mrs. Coote, funny mark on your neck.'

The joke went round the ship as jokes will do at sea.

## FIVE YEARS HARD

'What is the reason for the funny marks,' asked Mr. Pious Pure, a missionary from the Gold Coast one morning of the ship's purser.

'Something to do with the Hatmosphere,' replied the wise man warily.

Nobody enjoyed the joke more than the captain . . . and, at last, as one day the Governor would look red and the next see it, and as the Grenadier would be similarly, if alternatively, situated there grew up a feeling of resentment between the two men, but it was not till the last breakfast but one on board that trouble really arrived.

The Grenadier, marked in red like a Hindu, glared across the table at the Governor and then at Mrs. Coote similarly marked, while the Governor saw red and acted like a madman.

Then, both red-marked men and the lady caught the captain's eye. He laughed loudly.

'Go to my cabin,' said his Excellency to a steward 'and fetch a hand mirror from my dressing case.'

Slowly fixing the captain with a stony stare the Governor raised the glass before the captain's face. There was the tell-tale mark . . . all four had it, but with this difference . . . the lady possessed three!

All day long rumour, giggles, sneers and smiles pervaded the ship. Feeling ran high at the captain's table where it appeared likely there would be

## AMONG THE PAGANS

murder. But Tait, having caused the trouble, rose to the occasion and put matters right.

Next morning, the last of the voyage, all looked at the captain's table. Apparently there were no marks. Probably they had learnt their lesson?

Then, quietly, people began to glance in the mirrors and slink off as if ashamed. Tait had been at work. Half the ship's passengers were marked red!

'I . . . I . . . wonder what we thought was wrong?' asked a simple-minded missionary — 'a dear good woman' . . . of a Black Bishop who were 'comparing marks' on the hurricane deck.

'I'm sure I don't know,' replied the Right Reverend gentleman with his tongue in his cheek . . . 'do you?'

## CHAPTER VI

### TO ZARIA

'I'M looking forward to a good "rest" on board ship,' says Lobb the doctor to me as we sit facing each other in the train *en route* for Liverpool, 'a London season, the Coronation and all the rest of it is no real rest. Where did you pick up the dog?' he adds.

'A cast off from the Mennel,' I remark. He laughs.

'Not much to look at, anyway!' he says facetiously.

'No,' I remark, looking at him hard, 'the terrier is in good company in that respect!'

I had determined not to return to West Africa without a fox terrier to keep me company.

'How old is he?' adds the Doctor.

'It isn't a "he",' I reply, 'she's over distemper.'

\* \* \*

Lobb has his rest all right. Save for an hour and a half of very strenuous cricket in the afternoon with loose ball and all-round netting, he eats, sleeps, and drinks but does no more.

## TO ZARIA

We arrive at Lokoga. Bung is in command of the battalion and the station — on captain's pay.

Turtle has retired to a Canadian farm.

Rosher reigns at Artillery Villas.

'A couple of months here,' says Bung, 'and then we *taffi* to Kano for the show, will that suit you?'

'Ai,' I reply.

'There's only one snag,' he says, 'Rufus arrives shortly to inspect.'

'He can't kill us!' I reply.

'No,' says Bung, 'but it's always a damned nuisance . . . spit and polish . . . !'

\* \* \*

The inspection goes off well. I'm in command of a company. The Commandant, a red-faced, red-headed, little fellow . . . one of the best, comes down to share the sorrow or help deaden the shock. Rufus is little and sandy too. So is one of the gunners . . . Fergusson. The tactical exercise is in full swing.

Luckily I've been detailed to be 'enemy' in the bush . . . surrounding the polo ground.

Mount Patti looms above us.

'Don't go up to the top of the hill and make us come after you,' says Bung, 'harrass us like hell here. Keep out of sight . . . work round our flanks and try to capture the guns.'

## FIVE YEARS HARD

The gunners are being posted so as to fire east and north.

The inspecting staff arrives accompanied by the Commandant.

One of the 'apes' . . . black soldiers are irreverently called 'apes' by some . . . behaves stupidly.

Red-headed Fergy damns him . . . and . . . shame be it said, gives him a kick! A kick on parade, in front of Rufus! Think of it! The latter spots it too!

'Did you see Mr. Fergusson?' asks Rufus of the Commandant. 'No sir,' says the good man (an obvious lie).

'He *kicked a soldier*,' says Rufus indignantly, his face now purple.

'The devil he did, beg pardon, sir. He did, did he?' says 'the Rat' . . . the nickname for the Commandant . . . 'that's the worst of these damned red-headed little —s, they loose their rags so easily!'

History has never quite related the 'Red' sequel . . . of what happened between three little red-headed men! But this much is known. Only the 'tact' of the Rat at mess that night and a plentiful supply of 'the boy' saved the situation and an adverse report.

'Don't you go kicking niggers again,' says the Rat next day to Fergy, 'at least in front of your

## TO ZARIA

inferiors. I can't keep on making people happy to get you out of holes!' The inspection proves that the Waffs are up to their usual form . . . efficient . . . mobile . . . and . . . off parade quite irresponsible . . . as is shown by the following.

'High Jinks' are on. Rufus has cleared off. In a vacant bungalow in the civil lines, resides *pro tem*, a professor, on his way to discover the secrets of the Sahara. He has dined . . . quite wisely at the Waff mess. Naturally he has asked searching questions in regard to the habits of the natives. Yes, they are wild and savage. Sometimes they raid the white men's camps. Sometimes they torture their enemies and eat them later. Stories are told of great atrocities. The rich blood of the intellectual curdles. He retires to bed, not fearful but anxious. His dreams are dreadful.

'Let's dress up, black our faces and hands and carry him off to the bush!' says Murphy . . . half-seas-over.

The idea seems excellent.

Three men zigzag across the open spaces . . . and . . . surprise the professor in his beauty sleep.

Gagged, bound, his head in a tent bag, his arms tied behind him, the wretched terrified man, unable to cry or even kick, is carried back to the mess where all is dark and quiet. He knows not where he is! Lashed to the table, he remains . . . stretched

## FIVE YEARS HARD

out . . . stiff . . . imagining himself in a torture chamber . . . till the mess servants arrive at dawn.

At that time, when officers are leisurely dressing for parade on their verandas . . . some with swollen heads, others with tongues hanging out, a frenzied man rushes across the square in his pyjamas followed by pursuers . . . the mess 'boys', who, startled and terrified, have cut the cords.

The hue and cry is taken up. The professor, wild eyed, hair tossing in the morning breeze, 'makes for bush.' A lunatic is at large! No wonder!

Followed by officers on foot and horseback, 'boys,' horse 'boys,' soldiers, cooks . . . and the officer commanding the station, the demented man arrives at the bungalow of the Cantonment Magistrate who takes him in.

'Try this,' says the good magistrate handing out a stiff brandy and soda. The professor tells his tale.

'I've had many a bad dream myself after a thick night,' says the upholder of the law, 'but you beat me hollow!'

\* \* \*

During the interim of waiting to start on the Kano-Sokoto expedition we pass the time soldiering mildly, playing polo dangerously, and cultivating the acquaintance of the nurses — the valiant souls, who, sharing the heat, the flies, the mosquitoes and the fever, nurse us back to life when we are down.

## TO ZARIA

One of the nurses rides, so, on Wednesdays (a *dies non* as in India) we often ride together in the early morning. We trot from the hospital towards the doctors' quarters.

Native soldiers are marched to the M.O. for inspection on Wednesdays. Suddenly, rounding a corner with my fair companion, we come face to face with one hundred native soldiers, on parade, stark naked, waiting for the doctor!

The Hausa sergeant-major is nothing if not a gentleman. I go hot—the situation is certainly embarrassing! But the native N.C.O., taking after his more British prototype, is a past-master in the art of solving difficulties. Seeing the English lady, and appreciating the situation, he simply says 'about turn.' They turn about while we trot on! He, fully clad, salutes, and I return the compliment.

\* \* \*

One of the most friendly, inspiring incidents of the days of the conquest of Nigeria was the 'send off' of an expedition bound for active service—and to this the Kano 'circus' is no exception. The heavy baggage has been embarked, the artillery are there, and now possess the decks. We—the infantry—follow.

Bung, on his pony, heads the column, behind the band. The big drummer never twirled his sticks better. 'The Major' never threw his staff

## FIVE YEARS HARD

higher — Heads are up . . . chests out . . . Half these men are going to see a place — Kano — they left years before as slaves in bondage. They are about to get 'a bit of their own back' from the Fulani.

A martial tune — 'Soldiers of the Queen' — strikes up. The sandalled men catch step. The column winds between the mango trees which line either side of the dirty track towards water-side.

At the so-called 'wharf' the *élite* of Lokoga — civilians doctors, nurses, engineers, treasury officials — arrive to say 'good-bye.'

The mess steward — Bukrie — sports himself on the upper deck, mixing, serving, and swizzling cocktails and opening bottles. The corks pop . . . high life is in progress in the tropics! Last night has been a 'thick 'un!' It seems as if the whole civil population has come to 'wet the whistle.' While we drink and chat and talk of the next leave and the last sing-song, the women of the soldiers and carriers also have things to say on shore. Their separation allowances? Are they all right? What of the debts to Oudu Katsina, the local money-lender? and so on.

The corks keep on popping on the upper deck while salutations continue down below, for the Waff soldier is a great fighter — as he proved in the Great War — and the Waff women love a warrior. Heaven preserve any native soldier from the reputation of

## TO ZARIA

'coward' in so far as his women-kind are concerned! . . . No native woman has any use for a funkstick. It is the old, old story, old in the pages of history, writ large in the records of every army and every country. . . . 'None but the brave deserve the fair.' . . . There too is Fartima . . . a fair Fulani. Whose wife is she now? A Buture (white man) brought her down from Keffi and kept her till he went home. Then a judge took her on. Now, evidently, some soldier protects her! She is now what soldiers call an 'old sweat.'

The siren blows — 'All ashore,' shouts the black skipper from America with an air akin to that of the commander of some great transatlantic liner! White men obey! Bukrie packs up his glasses and bottles. Salutations are exchanged. The planks are pulled in. The Chief Commissioner of Prisons — as drunk as an owl, falls off the plank into the water amidst roars of laughter.

The *Empire* slowly steams ahead.

Now is the moment of the hour.

The band strikes up.

'Auld Lang Syne' . . . well played . . . The regimental march . . . and lastly the Hausa farewell.

We salute . . . as best we can.

Mount Patti, looming above Lokoga, stands out long after the outline of the station has disappeared. Lokoga! What men have lived there since it first

## FIVE YEARS HARD

became a settlement in the 'sixties . . . then a trading centre . . . an agricultural and experimental station.

The South Africa war claimed Lokogans on every big occasion. Kano fell in '03. War experience, initiative, resource, fortitude, calm, humour, good cheer — war virtues all — garnered in the lower reaches and swamps of the Niger and on the Fulani heights . . . what a show they made in the Flanders mud or on the chalky downs of Picardy during the great days!

\* \* \*

As I stand on deck I assemble my servants to pay them — they might have blown the money before and forgotten to sail! Who are they?

Alassen — once Porter's boy, whom I met in London when he was doing duty as officer's servant to the Northern Nigerian Coronation Contingent; Brimer, head horse boy who went home to his 'country' for a holiday while I went home to mine; Gunna, second horse boy, a friend or *aboki* of Brimer; Momman Dal, my orderly . . . *and the dog.*

'That dog will never get to Sokoto,' says Bung as he pats her head, 'she won't be able to keep up.'

'You see,' I say; 'but I have one difficulty about her. Her name is Bee but the boys *will* call her bitch! When I get her home what am I to do? I can't walk

## TO ZARIA

round England calling out "bitch!" She knows no other name!

'Get her home first!' says Bung with a laugh.

\* \* \*

We pass the same old spots — Muraji, Wushishi and the River Kaduna, for the intention is to pass through Zunguru, the new capital with its railway train and fine bungalows, and from there advance to Zaria for forward concentration. A great deal has happened since I left Wushishi, a bush outpost, a year ago. Zaria has been occupied, my friend Dickinson leading the dash which gained him a D.S.O. The new station, Zunguru, has been built and occupied. A light railway has been constructed and is in use. Paiko is peaceful. Bida is a dull resort. We must go farther afield to see life or avoid high living.

As we pass Wushishi we halt to examine what is left of our old camp — only a few huts remain. The fort is crumbling. Not a white man is to be seen.

At Zunguru the band of the 1st battalion meets us and plays us in. This is, indeed, a unique occasion! Never before have the two battalions met at the headquarters of 1st battalion! We dine as guests. Colonel Mactier, now commanding 1st battalion is naturally overjoyed at meeting his old love, the 2nd. A composite battalion is to be formed

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at Zaria and it he is to command on the expedition, while with him is to be his present adjutant, Kempthorne. Among our party is Romilly of the Welch. Both he and I were at Wellington with 'Kemp,' whom we had not met since those far off schooldays. The dinner proves convivial! All is good cheer. 'The nobs' are present and Spindle is at his best. After dinner we sing songs, which (of course), means that Spindle sings 'Sally.' Later we hold musical festivities of our own, the regimental band having departed. Well-oiled Chief officers of Departments, cock-fight and steeple-chase while the mess servants stand by in silent admiration.

'This is indeed a unique occasion,' says Mactier, 'so unique as to call for special effort — even if the time is late or early. I see John Stingo has thought fit to depart to bed! let us go revive him!'

Stingo — wise man — revives. To resist is futile. 'I beg you tell us, good Stingo,' says Mactier, 'why you thought fit to leave us in the lurch?'

'Just so,' replies Stingo between the hics, 'I could not *leave* you in the "*lurch*" since *I* lurched to bed and now you "*lurch*" after me.' At this point Mactier lurches off the veranda, and, falling ten feet on to his head, appears dead for ever.

All lurch after him in great concern, for they love their Colonel; yet he makes no sound.

Only Stingo — who, having rested, has slightly

## TO ZARIA

recovered — appreciates the situation. Forcing Mactier's head into a bucket of cold water he holds it under till bubbles denote that not only is the Colonel alive but nigh drowning!

A powerful man, the Colonel, he forces himself free, with water pouring from his hair and fire in his eyes.

'What the hell d'you think you're doing?' he wrathfully asks, seizing a polo stick. 'I'll scupper the lot of you.'

The gang sobers up and melts!

'Boy,' shouts Mactier, 'bring me a bottle of cold beer and a tin of salmon; I'm thirsty and hungry.'

Stingo, now beneath the bed, lies low. 'I trust to heaven,' he mutters to himself under his breath, 'there is some salmon and cold beer, otherwise he'll kill him.'

'Me bringee beer, sar,' says Jumbo, Stingo's boy, 'me no gettee salmon, me bring Massa lobster, very good.'

'All right,' says Mactier, 'you're the only man worth a damn to-night.'

'What a wonderful boy Jumbo is,' muses Stingo to himself, 'he's saved his life with a tin of lobster — resourceful.'

Mactier tucks into the lobster after quaffing a long glass of cold beer.

'That's better,' he says, and he *was* better; the

## FIVE YEARS HARD

cold douche to which Stingo had subjected him having sobered him up. There is a pause.

'Where's your master?' asks Mactier.

'Me no savee, sar,' says Jumbo quite truthfully, as he has no idea his master is hiding under the bed! The idea of the Director of Telegraphs lying on his tummy under a bed, would have been unbearable to Jumbo who has great ideas about his master's position in life — which is certainly not that of lying on his face on the floor!

'Your master tried to drown me,' says the Colonel. 'Anyhow, pull my boots off and I'll go to bed here; I've to be on parade at 6.'

'All man run bush, sar — Massa lie down, Jumbo he go look my Massa — he fear too much.'

\* \* \*

Clear headed, clear eyes, smart, alert at 6 a.m., the Colonel is on parade.

Stingo meanwhile, having spent an extremely uncomfortable night on the floor underneath Mactier who hogged it and snored above for two hours, dresses and goes to his office. A few hours later, bands playing, colours flying, as it were — there were none really — the 2nd battalion march to war led by Captain Bung, and with him rides Mactier — all smiles.

As they pass the office of the Director of Tele-

## TO ZARIA

graphs Stingo emerges to wave *au revoir* to the warriors. He lifts his hat to the commanding officer.

'Where the hell were *you* last night?' shouts out Colonel Mactier chaffingly.

'I expect,' says Stingo to himself, 'I know more about where we both were than you do.' 'Good luck, Bung,' he shouts. 'Good-bye, Stingo, old man,' Bung shouts back.

'These Waff men are wonderful,' says Stingo to his assistant as they stand together greeting the various officers as they pass — 'I don't know how they do it.'

'They can't keep it up,' replies the younger man, 'nobody could.'

As we ford the Kaduna river above the rapids Mactier says 'Adieu! see you later at Zaria,' and gallops off.

Save for putting out outposts we are now under active service conditions.

Carriers are limited to meagre requirements. A tent is shared by two, cooking pots by four. Rations are on the 'chop box' scale, a bottle of whisky or gin is to last a week! True there are 'medical comforts,' stout and brandy, Brand's essence and the like, but woe betide him who consumes these luxuries without authority!

We spend Christmas day on trek. That night, one Jones gets ill and the stout is opened! *He* drinks

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four bottles — according to the return. Later there's a row about it. Arriving at Zaria we concentrate under the shade of the trees near running water. The M.I. have arrived from Kontagora under Porter. With him is Winkle. Grass stables have been erected. My luck is in. I am reposted to M.I. and later, a friend, Wells, an experienced horse soldier from South Africa, also joins the company. The gunners make a good show. Mactier takes over his composite battalion. All is ready. We only await the arrival of the Colonel in command, an eye-glassed Rifleman and his staff.

Kano is five days march distant. The advance sounds — we're off!

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FALL OF KANO

To be able to take part in the final overthrow of Fulani rule is, to me, a great event.

For a hundred years these fair-skinned followers of the Prophet have reigned in the Hausa states.

Conquering the peaceful traders of the great cities — Sokoto, Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Bida and Kontagora, they superimposed their power, at first for good but later for evil to the underdogs — slavery, bribery and corruption thrived. Accordingly, the actual Hausa people welcome our advent— they'd had enough of Fulani misrule and injustice — a change might be for the better — it could not be for the worse.

The descendant of the great Sultan Bello of Sokoto, Ruler of the Fulani Empire, Sariken Muslim, Sultan of Sokoto, overlord of Hausaland and Adamarwa, second only in holiness and in power to the Sultan of the North, nominator of the Five Emirites of Katsina, Kano, Zaria, Bida and Kontagora, had only one use for the Hausas — extortion! They knew it.

And, as a message to the High Commissioner in 1901 was impudent, and the attitude one of scorn,

## FIVE YEARS HARD

his number became 'up' and we set out to teach him a lesson!

With an M.I. screen in front but otherwise trekking along in the usual way we receive a check at Bebeji, half way to Kano. The first fight is at hand!

Orders are hastily issued: —

M.I. to the left and right — the infantry to storm the gate.

*En passant*, I speak to Romilly who, with his company, is in reserve.

'I don't call this war,' he says, 'there's nothing in it! It's all rot . . . Not like South Africa.'

'You'd better not say so,' I reply, 'the big bugs haven't been to the Cape!'

As I wait at the northern exit, dismounted and ready, to open fire on the fugitive Fulani who will no doubt bolt to Kano to give warning of our approach, all are expectant. Carbines are loaded, sights adjusted. We know the range. Suddenly the gate swings open. Robed men, mounted on country ponies dash out. It's a fine sight.

I give orders for rapid fire. *Not a saddle* empties! What's wrong? The range is only a hundred yards, and not a bullet has found a billet! I open fire with my sporting rifle. Six men fall. That's better but not enough. I fire single shots (it's before the days of clips). Three more fall as well as some horses. . . . I don't like that, it hurts to hit a horse. They are

# NORTHERN NIGERIA MOUNTED INFANTRY



*Above :* The author's section in action at Bebeji.  
*Below :* Sergeant-Major Dundara, D.C.M., on the march, in pursuit  
of the Rebels to Burmi.



## THE FALL OF KANO

getting farther and farther away. We must get to grips. 'Stand to your horses—mount and follow me!' I order—we're off! Hell for leather! We cut off some who try to gain the Kano road which is a bush path. The country is open—I am well mounted and of light weight. Soon I'm far ahead and alone! I draw my revolver.

Overtaking a dusky Fulani horseman I press the trigger and bore a hole through his saddle and himself. He falls a fearful 'purler' at full speed as I jump over him. He nearly had me down! Still, I press on.

All is forgotten in the chase.

Another round, another man—four rounds left. Yet another and another!

Then the scene changes. A swordsman rides at me full tilt. I wait—shall I fail? Steady—I press the trigger and he falls almost on me. Only one round left!

I look back over my shoulder. There are no M.I. in sight, while in front Fulani gaze at me a hundred yards away.

What is the best thing to do? Shall I carefully reload my revolver from the pouch, taking care that the one live round is not lost while the spent cartridge cases are ejected or draw my sharpened sword and await events? To reload takes time! Should the Fulani pluck up courage to charge a single white man

## FIVE YEARS HARD

they will be on me in a flash, and yet, one round against a multitude is not much good! I compromise. Drawing the blade, I twist the sword knot round my wrist and let the weapon dangle while I load with two hands, the reins falling loosely round my wallets.

With one eye on the Fulani and the other on my task I do not notice the dust or thud of hoofs behind me.

Dundara, the valiant sergeant-major who gained his D.C.M. at Bida, arrives, followed by a few.

Dismounting, I throw the reins to him and sit down in the sand. Recharging the magazine of the sporting '303 rifle I open fire at the little group a hundred yards away. It's pure murder, but why not? Would they not do the same to me were the boot on the other foot? The party being wiped out completely, we (Dundara and I) saunter over, our horses being led.

'These no big men,' says the dusky soldier, shaking his head — 'slaves' — as he examines their robes and rings. The men take some charms and rings off the dead bodies while I cut 'brass' stirrup-irons off and sling some swords across the saddles. Then we march back, the richer by some dozen remounts, having spilt a lot of blood without losing any of our own. On the way we pass dead bodies, the handiwork of the pursuit, also wounded men and horses. These are 'finished off.' A man, twisting and

## THE FALL OF KANO

turning in agony, mutters to me in Hausa as he lies helpless in the dust.

'What does he say, Dundara?' I ask.

'He say you shoot him quick same others. He catch too much pain.'

I examine him minutely. He's not old but his pointed beard gives him an aged appearance. I turn him over. He screams. I've hurt him. He's hit in the right side. The flat nosed revolver bullet — a Dum-Dum — is probably in him still.

'It's made an awful mess — I can't shoot him,' I say to Dundara. 'it's gone too far.' The others were different, they didn't speak — but this fellow is alive and almost kicking — I can't shoot him — I won't! Lift him up carefully and put him on my saddle.' This done, we march back to Bebeji — a mile away, I leading my horse on which rides the wounded Fulla, the remainder of the troops being settled down in camp. My arrival is received with ribald laughter.

'Shoot the——' 'A nigger on a white man's saddle! You should be shot,' and similar remarks greet my ears.

But the doctor thinks otherwise. Langley extracts the bullet, and, leaving his patient settled comfortably with friends, promises to send more assistance later. Next morning we march on Kano. We have 'smashed' Bebeji, but we have done far

## FIVE YEARS HARD

more than that! The skill of Langley and the attention the wounded Fulani received turned a hater into an admirer and — Kano subdued — Katsina surrendered — Sokoto collapsed — Skindu Fulani, the wounded warrior, spent the rest of his life in the service of the King, healing the wounds, re-organizing long-lost native justice and helping to make the Hausa states a better place to live in under British rule. Eleven years later Skindu Fulani heard the rattle of German musketry. Joining the British army he fought for us as he fought against us at Bebeji on that February morn. I'm glad I didn't kill him!

Groping our way forward through the thorn-bush expanse we reach irrigation a few miles from Kano. Onions! Spring onions! 'Violets' growing in magnificent profusion! We help ourselves. Next morning the column advances in orderly fashion, and, just behind a ridge forms square — carriers inside — a huge square — an orderly array. Bayonets fixed. The square advances. The M.I. push out on the flanks. The ground is flat — fairly cultivated, sandy and open. I get well away. The task? To watch the gates towards Sokoto and Katsina and kill as many as possible.

All is quiet. A pin might have been heard to drop in the desert sand. But I have an awful sore throat. I can hardly speak. We watch the exits

## THE FALL OF KANO

while the square advances towards the thick mud wall, and the smell of onions wafts across the desert, blown to us from the mouths of men! In the far-off distance I hear a bugle call. It is 'the charge' — I hear the familiar cheer. Through my glasses — I can see 'Tin Belly' Dyer of the Tins, far in advance, sword in hand — followed by two other white men, This is exciting! There is an explosion — a huge report! Dundara looks at me enquiringly.

'Blowing in the main gate,' I say.

There is more cheering. The Fulani funk the square. They did not charge. A mounted orderly gallops over to me with a message from Porter. 'Get well round to the left,' it runs 'watch the exits and stay out till relieved. The column marches to the Emir's palace in the city.'

We post ourselves over a five-mile front — Wells and I — and shoot beasts, birds and people; guinea-fowl on the outlying farms — tame birds — oribi — gazelle — the latter new to us — fugitive traders and caravan keepers who refuse to stop. Real red murder reigns — at least it looks like it — but 'orders is orders,' once the blood is up it is difficult, well nigh impossible, to differentiate between the merely frightened and the fugitive escaping — escaping not only to escape but to live to fight another day! The ostriches regard us in blank amazement.

At last the sun dies down behind us as we watch

## FIVE YEARS HARD

the walls and collect the camels, donkeys and horses loaded up with merchandise which we have intercepted. The caravan men wish to go home!

'Tell them,' I say to Dundara, 'they will have to see the Bombaturi (Big White Man), he will give orders about them, they must come with us.'

'He say he no Fulani — he no like Fulani — he Hausa trader,' says Dundara.

'Then he's all right,' I say, 'he'll have to tell that to the Bombaturi.'

'He say you've killed his wife, his father, his yaro (small boy) this day — they no done you harm, why you kill 'em?'

'You tell him,' I say, 'if he has any complaint he must tell the Bombaturi.'

A message arrives which puts an end to this somewhat embarrassing argument with the Hausa trader regarding the fate of what appears to be his whole family killed at random, when we opened fire early in the day on to the caravan which failed to halt because it was afraid to. 'The bearer,' runs the message, 'will guide you to the Emir's palace. Come in at once.'

We pass over a viaduct across the double moat and through the gate which is set in the thirty-feet-thick, sun-dried, mud wall surrounding the trading centre of the Western Sudan.

'These men of old possessed some military

## THE DEFENSIVE WALLS OF KANO



*Above :* Interior view—showing fire steps, loop-holes, overhead cover and shelters.

*Below :* Exterior view—showing viaduct approach, flanking fire and gate.



## THE FALL OF KANO

engineering skill,' I remark to Wells. 'Look at this gate: it is in a re-entrant, flanked by fire on either side. Look here; look at the fire steps inside and the sloping walls ending in a niched parapet, thirty feet thick at the bottom — perhaps ten at the top — and the solid wooden gate. You couldn't breach this wall with anything less than a siege gun. You couldn't hit the gate because the approach is zigzag and it's under cover.'

We ride through fields of guinea corn — inside the walls — food grown in case the city should ever have to endure a prolonged siege from some hostile place such as Zinder across the French frontier — and then pass along narrow passages between clusters of houses, and across the market. The slave market, till yesterday a going concern, is now empty — never again to open. We reach the Emir's palace. It is a big compound, enclosed by a high wall, large enough to accommodate the whole expedition in comfort. 'Tin Belly,' we hear, has been wounded by a sword-cut delivered by the chief eunuch of the Emir's harem while groping his way about in the dark. Poor 'Tin Belly!' How was he to know he was treading on forbidden ground? The state rooms remind one of stories from the *Arabian Nights*. Coloured in beautiful tints of blue and gold the walls and ceilings shine out even in the darkness of the surroundings, for windows

## FIVE YEARS HARD

there are none and doors few. The Emir fled — perhaps to fight another day — and left the conduct of the battle to his chief soldier! Hence perhaps, the farce of the morning! Complete surrender — hardly a shot fired! Is this the much boasted strength of Kano under the Fulani? A handful of resolute men armed only with swords could have held us up for days in the palace.

We picket our horses in the compound and turn in early. It has been a long day in the saddle, if nothing worse. But before we sleep we eat and eat well. What a dinner!

‘I don’t know whether to drink half my bottle of whisky to-night,’ I say to Wells, ‘or to let it last the week?’

‘We’ll do a bottle in between us,’ says Charlie. ‘I know a way of getting more!’

### M E N U

Whitebait.

Roast gazelle.

Sweet potatoes — Indian corn on the cob.

Poached eggs on spinach.

Por-Por.

Coffee.

A Melacrino cigarette and a ‘wee spot’ of Grand Marnier from the ‘secret reserve’ and all is well.

## THE FALL OF KANO

Early morning brings its duty.

There's a certain amount of 'skrimshanking' about, so Charlie and I have our work cut out — a double dose. The walls have to be loopholed and fire steps built in order that we may be able to defend the palace, if attacked. Loot has to be collected — tons of cowries, done up in matting, are found in the Emir's treasury.

Patrols have to be sent and kept out all day towards the Sokoto or exposed flank. More 'skrimshanking!' Duty falls heavily when all do not share the burden!

'Winkle is sick — he looks putrid — I wonder what's wrong?' asks Charlie innocently. Men shrug their shoulders. Rotten climate this! Still! all round us are things of interest.

The huge wall — eleven miles in circumference — the thirteen gates — the fast refilling markets. Within two days trade is normal — better than it has ever been before, for there is no Government extortion. We chat with Arabs and while away the time — a horse soldier has always more to do than others — while we await the word 'Go.'

The Emir has fled — is he at Sokoto?

Kano has fallen. Its valour is a frost!

We 'cry down credit' in the market and give warning of the new regime by beat of drum and announce the penalty for looting — 'death' for

## FIVE YEARS HARD

soldiers on active service. One soldier makes a mistake by murdering and robbing a trader and is run in. He pays the penalty in the presence of the crowd at the hands of a Maxim gun detachment who shoot him stone dead sitting on an empty chop box.

And all the Hausas and Fulani marvel at the justice of the British Rule.

'Ah,' says the Emir, 'these white men of the crossed Flag [the Union Jack]: yesterday a battle with us — to-day an execution of their own soldier for us because he robbed and killed an enemy in war! Allah has brought us great wisdom, justice and understanding.'

'That was the rummiest show I ever saw,' says 'Amelia' Romilly. Tinker sat on the chop box first and Armstrong levelled the gun at his heart and clamped it at ten yards range.

The box was on the edge of the grave. Then the soldier sat down blindfolded, and took Tinker's place and the gun ripped out half a belt. He bounded in the air, turned head over heels and landed on the far edge of the pit. The faces of the crowd were a wonder to behold — their exclamations dramatic. 'Mard Allah,' exclaimed a fat trader weighing about eighteen stone, as he threw up his hands and collapsed. I bet it was the most wonderful thing he had ever seen!

## THE FALL OF KANO

Civilian control is to take the place of military administration. Native law is to apply when and where possible — only inhuman customs and habits are to disappear. But pointed bayonets and sharpened swords — out of sight — yet not out of mind, support the velvet glove.

'I wish I had had the job of defending this place against all comers,' says Charlie as we ride out to the dye pits — the pits which provide our libraries, our chairs, and blotting pads with that beautifully tinted Morocco leather. 'You and I, here, with very little trouble, could have kept the whole expedition at bay with ten rifles and lots of ammunition.'

But the Emir — by flying to Sokoto, kept his flag high for over three years — and deceived us.

'D'you know why the men can't hit a haystack at fifty yards?' asks Charlie. 'The carbines are worn out! I warn you! When firing at a hundred, "fix sights" and then aim at the heads instead of the heels — and you may kill something!'

'Don't I know to my cost!' I reply. 'At Bebeji they nearly got away scot free because of it. The carbines are old and the barrels quite smooth, but don't forget they were quite good enough for bush fighting. This is the first time the men have ever been in the open or fought at over about ten yards range! The gunners did the long-range firing!'

We make final preparations for the march to

## FIVE YEARS HARD

Sokoto — a march which interests Winkle greatly as he is still sick. And Burnham, a subaltern is also interested. 'In South Africa,' he says, 'I travelled a Basuto girl dressed up in boy's clothing for six months till some b.f. staff officer found out by thrashing "him" naked — for some minor irregularity, after which I lost my good job of commandeering officer when I had a wagon all to myself and Sophie. Now I've picked up a Hausa girl, it's not so easy. I can put her in native male attire, but I've no wagon and she can't keep up on foot, and even then I share a tent with Dodd . . . it wouldn't be decent!'

'I advise you to buy a pony for her to ride,' says The Egg. 'You can square it with Dodd; he's a sport'. So Burnham bought a Kano pony for £2 — £1 more than he had given for the girl, thus demonstrating the fact that humanity is liable to be over-valued at times when dealing with primitive peoples.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SOKOTO STANDS TO FIGHT

'It is anticipated,' says the commander of the column, 'that Sokoto will fight.'

'I hope,' whispers Romilly in my ear, 'his idea of fighting and mine are the same! Bebeji was supposed to be a battle! Kano is an event! Poor old Sokoto!'

Romilly (The Egg) was killed in action in France; Morland, when a full general, died as a result of the war — both had to 'taste fighting' such as neither had ever contemplated, before their 'Last Post' was sounded.

But, with it all, we are under no delusions as to the rough time in front of us. Waterless marches . . . difficulties over watering horses . . . tried tempers and troubled nerves . . . all may tell their tale.

'There is one whopping march without water,' I say to Charlie, 'I wonder how my dog will do it . . . she has been all right so far. . . .'

'Alassen can carry her in front as he has done all along,' replies Charlie; 'she seems to thrive on pummel bumping.'

The procession passes out through the market, under the gate along to where Charles and I have, quite unfairly, shared patrols each day . . . alone.

## FIVE YEARS HARD

As a column we are handicapped. There are no maps . . . no one had been there before, at least that way. Barth saw Sokoto in the 'fifties. Then he sat with Arab traders and offered and received their food . . . on an equality . . . or almost so . . . save that he was, in their eyes, the inferior! Calling at Sokoto hat in hand is very different from demanding surrender of power at the point of the bayonet! But in 1903 we made use of information supplied by Barth.

Nearer and nearer we approach the most waterless belt. Farther and farther we leave our base behind, sometimes even carrying the water for ourselves to drink while the horses go without. Occasionally we run across Fulani cow herds, following the so-called green grass; at others we surprise charcoal burners who clear off in fear.

The big jump taken, we are close to Sokoto — where we find other forces assembled from Argungu, in an oasis. We camp among the onions!

Much of my time has been spent riding with a native officer of the Egyptian Army attached to us as an intelligence officer — a sure sign that the subjugation of Darfur is considered to be about to shape on the same lines as have our more Western conquests.

One day Burnham passes me on the march and pulls me aside. 'I'm going to kill that black swine

## SOKOTO STANDS TO FIGHT

riding beside you in a helmet,' he says with indignation.

'Why?' I ask in surprise.

'You remember the girl I bought at Kano?' I nod. 'That —— has been carrying on with her! I'm furious!'

'Oh . . . I shouldn't kill him,' says Dodd, who has heard the conversation. 'Castrate the ——r . . . it's easy — my horse boy will do it: he used to be a butcher!'

There is a roar of laughter. At this moment the Egyptian officer rode back to us.

'What is the joke?' he asks me affably.

'Hah, hah,' I reply — 'you wait and see.'

There has been a scrap on our right flank against the Magagi of Kotokorshi, whom Charlie killed after which he bagged his kit.

'I think,' I say to Charlie as we ride along together, 'you may get a D.S.O. out of that Magagi affair.'

'You never know,' he replies, 'there's many a slip between the cup and the lip!' We laugh.

'This spot looks nice,' says Charlie as we approach the onion bed, whereupon he proceeds to 'doss down' for the night.

'Not so fast,' shouts out Peebles, 'where d'you think you're going? You're for reconnaissance at once — all the M.I. — to draw fire.'

We reconnoitre.

## FIVE YEARS HARD

The Sokoto people show more life. They at least will die if they can't fight! They charge us. One horseman nearly kills Charlie — others get right into our ranks before the death whistles sound — the crack of the bullets. We look forward to to-morrow — a fight at last — some slaughter — much fun. 'I've a bottle of Guinness in my bath,' I say, 'I've saved it to drink at Sokoto.'

'I've a small bottle of champagne,' says Charlie, 'we'll mix it — Bismark's velvet — after the battle!'

Romilly stays behind grousing and guarding stores in the oasis while we advance at dawn across the desert. This time the M.I. are inside the square lest they mask the fire. The Fulani come over. Hundreds, thousands of shrieking humanity — mounted and on foot. Drumming and horning — up they come; right up to the bayonet points! The Maxims belch forth — brigaded guns — Rat-tat-tat — that's fine!

'Mowing by the million,' shouts Raikes an M.G. officer.

'What's that?'

'Numbers 1 and 2 stripped — barrel casing gone.'

'What?'

'Why?'

'No water?'

'Impossible! I saw the jackets filled myself,' says Raikes.

## SOKOTO STANDS TO FIGHT

'Here, you black bastard,' shouts the British N.C.O., to a carrier, seeing that both numbers 1 and 2 guns are out of action and destroyed for lack of water. 'What you do with water?'

'This man drink 'em, sar. I look 'im,' says an officer's boy.

It is true. Some of the Maxim gun carriers had surreptitiously drunk the water out of guns 1 and 2. Water is scarce. The officer, not knowing, opened fire. Result — two melted barrels! Moral — 'watch the water in the desert.'

Later, each carrier concerned receives forty-eight cuts with a bularla, or sjambok, while piercing shrieks resound above the jabber of the voices of victory, and are ordered to pay for new barrels — an expensive drink of water! Luckily the jamming of the two guns made little difference.

Soon all was calm. Faithful slaves died by the score round the mystic green flag of the Emir — who flees. Officers run out to capture this flag and 'finish off' the wounded with sporting rifles.

Peebles grabs the flag, and, stripping it, slips it through his wallet straps.

Charles and I mooch around among the dead bodies seeing if there's anything worth having on them.

'A poor lot!' says Charlie. 'I wonder if that anklet is Ashanti gold? Here, orderly, cut that foot off with your adda and take off the anklet.'

## FIVE YEARS HARD

Whack — whack — two strokes and it's done. Off comes the anklet. Charles feels it in his hand — as if calculating its weight.

'If that's gold,' he says, 'my trip to Sokoto has been all right. Here, Momma, get me that armlet.'

Whack goes the adda again . . . off flies the arm in one direction, while the armlet hurls through the air in another. At this moment Kempthorne arrives on the scene. 'I suppose they're dead?' he asks.

'What the hell *do* you think I am?' asks Charles, indignantly, 'Damn it man, there's a limit!'

'Well there's a lot of poor devils to be finished off still,' he says, 'and the carriers will pull the lot to pieces if they get the chance, dead or alive, for the things they wear.'

'Yes . . . but I'm not a carrier,' says Charles; 'anyhow who's going to bury this lot?'

'No one,' I reply, 'the sun and the vultures will do the trick.'

This interesting conversation is ended by the M.I. being ordered in pursuit.

We chase and kill till the area is clear of living men — and we tire of blood and bullets. Later — returning in the dusk, my eyes light on a bit of green cloth in the sand. Jumping off my pony I examine it. 'The Emir's flag I think,' I say to Dundara. 'Someone must have dropped it.' Passing the flag through my wallet straps I think no more about it.

## THE SOKOTO BATTLEFIELD



*Above :* Some of the dead, and the wounded being 'finished off' by an officer.  
*Below :* The surrender of the main army of the Emir of Sokoto observed by the author's dog.



## SOKOTO STANDS TO FIGHT

At 'chop' that night Smith of the Staff strolls over.

'The Chief wants that flag,' he says. 'It can't be found!'

I walk over to my saddle in the horse lines to fetch my flag.

It has gone — and — nearby lies a horse boy — dead!

'Lucky I didn't mention that flag,' I say to myself as I go to bed.

'There's hell to pay over that flag, or at least over the loss of it,' says Peebles. 'It's required for the installation of the new Emir to-morrow — without it no one can properly be an Emir.'

I say nothing — but think the more.

In the middle of the night a light touch wakens me. I pass my hand automatically under my pillow to my revolver. Have I not been dreaming of assassinated horse boys, lost flags, rebel Emirs and Sokoto without a proper Emir, thanks to the loss of the flag?

'Massa it be me, Alassen,' says my boy. 'Takidar (letter) for you, sar.'

I rub my eyes while he lights a lamp — electric torches are unknown. 'Yes, it's a chit for me all right,' I say.

'Proceed forthwith with your section along the Southern Road,' I read. 'This guy knows the way. Keep on keeping on till you meet His Excellency

## FIVE YEARS HARD

the High Commissioner. Escort him back. Call in at H.Q. before you leave.'

'Tell Dundara to saddle up,' I say to Alassen. 'I'll ride the grey.'

'Sorry to have to pull you out like this, Pup,' says the Intelligence Officer, 'but there is a persistent rumour about that the fugitive Emir will try to capture Lugard — he'd be better dead than that. The damned flag is missing too — don't mention it but bring the old man here. He's done a very plucky but risky thing. He has no escort and simply trekked up from Zunguru across country, alone, with Hoppy, who is half dead with anxiety.'

We meet the Chief at dawn, while breakfasting and escort him back to camp.

Later, amidst the pomp of war and the pageantry of the Western Sudan, the new Emir of Sokoto is installed and takes the oath of allegiance in the presence of the King's representative — Sir Frederick Lugard. 'Where's the flag?' is on the tip of every tongue, yet not one word is spoken.

'I bet that bounder, whatever you call him — the escaped Emir — has got the flag and means to make trouble,' says Peebles.

\* \* \*

The expedition breaks up — Some go to Zunguru, others to Lokoga while the M.I. concentrates at Zaria for the winter.

## SOKOTO STANDS TO FIGHT

Charlie and I trek round the waterless road to Katsina as escort to the High Commissioner. This is no adventure, merely long marches, little water and less sleep. The task of an M.I. officer is hard on the desert fringe. Sometimes it takes four hours to water forty horses, so slowly does the water trickle into the wells from which we must draw, at great depth, in native calabashes — on long lines — by hand. At Katsina the Chief receives the homage of the Emir who is wise. At one time, Katsina alone held out and defied the triumphant progress of the Fulani from Sokoto to Kontagora.

I am left alone at Katsina with my section, behind a zareba, to await the arrival of an infantry company.

With a week to myself — a week of complete rest — luxury, homage and amusement never before contemplated, I make hay while the sun shines.

I fraternize with French officers who ride over on camels to see me . . . one of whom I am to meet twelve years later in a Flemish billet behind an allied firing line.

The Emir of Katsina is at my feet! He sends me presents. I visit him. He visits me. He asks one favour. As he likes me will I live in Katsina always and advise him? He is so helpless with the new white men, he says. I can have all he has to give. Money, power, land, horses and Fulani wives. I can go home when I like, provided I promise to

## FIVE YEARS HARD

return. Perhaps one day he might go with me to see the great white King?

He tries hard to tempt me. He takes me to see the last batch of girl slaves ever privately paraded in Katsina. Beautiful Fulani girls walk, quite nude, in front of big merchants who select in strict secrecy.

'These,' says the Emir, 'were bought before the white men came . . . this is only the division of the deal. That fine young Arab there is just about to start a completely new harem — his father lives at Darfur — here he is his father's agent. Now he is my honoured guest as are you. Will you not stay for all time at Katsina?' What a chance! However it is not to be.

Pointing out that, however much I might wish to fall in with his offer, at the immediate moment my duty is to serve the King at Zaria, I take my leave.

The Sokoto campaign is over — only the honours and awards remain, and yet, thanks to the missing green flag and the correct tactics of the fugitive Emir, far more fighting is to take place against him — over a space of three years — far more than was ever staged by the 'big guns.' Far more casualties are to be given and received than were given and taken in all Kano, Sokoto, Zaria, Bida and Kontagora put together. Such is fate, for — unrealized — the fugitive Emir held the initiative and

## SOKOTO STANDS TO FIGHT

kept it till he died, and when he died it died with him. For, although a 'plan of campaign' — drawn up by staff experts — made the occupation of Sokoto possible, the regimental officers of Nigeria — unaided — for a period of three years kept him in his place and eventually finished him off.

## SNAKES IN THE GRASS

REACHING Zaria I met Charles Wells on the polo ground.

'The grabbers are just off home on leave,' he remarks. 'Crawley is in command, you are to be Acting Adjutant. We are to raise four companies of M.I. to guard the territory taken over. There are as good a lot of new fellows here as you need ever wish to meet. An old friend of yours — Pompey Green has just arrived . . . and . . .'

'Pompey!' I exclaim, 'well I'm blowed — the last time I saw him was at Standerton before the De Wet hunt.'

We settle down to fun and work. Horse lines there are none but we have three hundred horses, mostly captured remounts. Shelters must be built. The rains will soon be on us. Men have to be trained. The Orderly Room consists of an 'E.P.' tent. We mess in groups.

But trouble is brewing on account of the Emir's flag. At polo one day I'm sent for to the Residency. 'They say,' says Crawley, 'there's a row on . . . I don't believe it. Take your old section of M.I. with

## SNAKES IN THE GRASS

Dundara . . . you won't want any carriers, they can't keep up . . . stuff all the wallets with food and fill the bandoliers with ammunition and go like hell to Bebeji. From there follow the crowd whichever way it goes. I'm told rebels are trekking across to Bauchi from Sokoto.'

'Are they rebels?' I ask. 'Have they been beaten? Who are they?'

'Damned if I know,' says Crawley. 'I believe the Resident at Sokoto is windy that's all. Do your best!'

I get away inside an hour.

Arriving at Bebeji we turn right and follow a mixed crowd — thousands — mostly hostile, sullen or indifferent — bow and arrow men, slaves, caravan men, camel men, horsemen, men at arms, a few headmen, hundreds of women, priests, children — tons of household gods. All the country we pass through has been burnt, looted or vacated.

We commandeer food for horse and man. I live on tinned salmon and sardines, while dry biscuits are a luxury! Still we peg on miles and miles, and still we pass whole country-sides on the move. 'I believe I'm getting fever, Alassen,' I say to my 'boy' — (the dog Bee is left behind with Charles Wells).

'Massa no eat, he not get bed sleep, white man no fit stand up like so long live,' he replies.

## FIVE YEARS HARD

It was madness to send me out so unprovided for. Alassen was quite right.

Then the unexpected happens.

Unassuming bowmen — part of the crowd — suddenly open fire with poisoned arrows in our midst while we are resting in the shade with piquets out.

Two soldiers and six horses are hit at once. We open fire and mow down about a hundred. The remainder (?) . . . seek shelter in the bush.

'These men come back kill us all,' says Dundara. 'We no get plenty arrasasi (ammunition) . . . best we go back Bebeji get more men.'

'We'll stay here,' I say. 'Get one good soldier, take his uniform off, make him dress like a bushman. Take the clothes from the dead bodies. I will send a letter to Zaria. Where are you going?' I ask.

'I go shoot dem two wounded men of ours . . . they get plenty pain . . . no good keep 'em' — says Dundara. Never before have I seen men in such agony. Convulsions, tongues swollen, tearing their hair and their clothes; moaning, groaning, foaming at the mouth; the bodies swelling, the hands and feet stiffening, if this is God's way of killing people, I can't understand it, I think! But I am wrong, it isn't God's way, it's man's method!

Two shots ring out — two rounds we can ill afford — now we're down to twenty rounds a man,

## SNAKES IN THE GRASS

counting the bullets of our dead men. Dundara returns and salutes. Neither of us speaks.

The disguised soldier clad in a bushman's skin and carrying my leather ju-ju chain round his waist departs.

'Help,' I write. 'It's a big show. Send Wells with every available man, carriers, food, 400 rounds a man at least. I stay here.'

Four hours later I send a duplicate message. All is quiet. Later, a hostile host returns and resumes the attack. Almost every round is spent, but we are still safe. We fix bayonets. I draw my sharpened sword.

It's too much. A buzzing in the ears — the light goes dim — I'm off — unconscious.

A few days later, between Bebeji and Zaria, I open my eyes to see Dundara, Alassen and Momma Dal bending over me. 'Where am I?' I ask.

I'm on a native mat — my pillow is a coat, British warm.

'Ah!' I hear Alassen exclaim, 'He lib.'

Cared for by devoted soldiers of the Waffs, who slipped away under cover of darkness from the enemy, and Alassen, who carried me by night so as to avoid the heat of the sun and watched over me by day, I reach Zaria.

'It was a d——d close shave, Bull Pup,' says Charlie.

## FIVE YEARS HARD

The two disguised soldiers never got through — of their fate there is no doubt. Their loyalty ruled out all else save the certainty of death.

\* \* \*

Crawley becomes ill; there is no doctor. We take it in turn to nurse him for dysentery. Another close shave! Blain, a Scottish doctor, arrives in the nick of time and pulls him through.

Later Crawley is carried in a hammock to Zunguru — red bearded, long haired, haggard, pale, the immaculate sportsman is saved for Flanders where he dies eleven years later.

\* \* \*

Still the war clouds gather.

'This Emir with his damned flag,' says Pompey Green, 'is getting a bit too thick. Rebellion in the rains!'

'We must do something,' I say.

'Yes, at once,' he replies, 'order Bulger to trek to Bauchi with every trained man and two subalterns. At Bauchi he will join up with the infantry. There is talk of trouble between here and Kano. Warn Kano and Katsina. Hurry the recruits through musketry here, and put the store-house in a state of defence.' Crisp words.

'We can do no more,' says Pompey next day, after

## SNAKES IN THE GRASS

the column under Bulger had left — 'well found,' this time, in all essentials.

Julian Hasler arrives and assumes command; with him is Jim Mackenzie of the Blues.

We play polo, shoot duck and snipe, lesser bustard and gazelle and make a jump course. The Western Sudan Turf Club finds its feet. Routine continues, . . . also 'Rebellion.'

'Resident like see you one time, sar,' says a police orderly to me, as I write my home mail.

'I wonder what's the matter,' I say to Charlie, as I walk across the polo ground to the civil lines.

'Ah! Crozier,' says Ash, 'sit down — a cocktail?'

'Thanks. Well?' I say, 'what about it?'

'An unfortunate case,' he says, 'you have an officer called Bellamy?' I nod.

'A Mallam of Sokoto complained in court to-day that Bellamy seduced his daughter at Sokoto and took her off. He is keeping her here. The trouble is that she is below the age, even in native law.'

'Bellamy's away,' I say.

'All right — keep him away,' replies the Resident. 'The girl will have to go back, if the parents will take her, and Bellamy will have to pay for his pleasure — I'll fix the compensation and try to keep it quiet.'

'I'm awfully obliged to you,' I say. (I had no idea Ash was such a sport.)

'My dear fellow,' he says, 'we must all pull to-

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gether out here — and — of course if “they” get hold of it down below “they’ll” break Bellamy; and if those d——d psalm-singing ——s at home once get hold of it God knows what *they’d* do!

‘I agree,’ I reply.

‘There’s another thing now you’re here,’ he says; ‘you know that Corporal Abubukr, you have in your guardroom under sentence of death for murder on the way up from Keffi when that company looted?’ I nod.

‘The sentence has been confirmed. He’s to be taken to the village and hanged.’

‘Ugh!’ I exclaim with a shudder.

‘You’ll have to send a party under an officer to carry out the sentence,’ he says. ‘I have no police, and anyhow it’s best for the soldiers to save their own souls!’

‘It’s awful,’ I say. ‘You know he’s been in our guardroom for close on six months. I pass him ten times a day at least and chuck him cigarettes! He weeds our gardens — I think it’s awful. He’s really a good fellow — the custom of his country being to loot, rob and kill pagans and — ’

‘Not in the King’s uniform,’ says the Resident sharply; ‘we don’t now do those things.’

‘I agree with you there,’ I say.

‘Well, I’ll send you round the papers,’ Ash continues. ‘I shall require a certificate from the officer

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that the sentence has been carried out and none of this escaping business or anything like that — you know — or there'll be trouble!

In the morning I see Abubukr who salutes with precision. I tell him he's 'For it' — he must die.

'*Chio kai nun,*' he replies. '*Allah ma baka lafia.*' (Very well, God will give me luck.)

I send a message to Bellamy, who is out shooting, telling him to stay away, and give him the job of killing his friend Abubukr. Later Abubukr comes to say good-bye and thanks me for small favours! I feel rotten about it all.

In a month's time, receiving the death certificate from Bellamy and a cheque for the Mallam's daughter, I forward both to Ash.

We dine well that night (everyone likes Bellamy), and afterwards hold a sing-song.

'You know the song "The Miller's Daughter",' says Rogers, 'I've a topping new verse; shall I sing it?'

This suggestion meeting with approval, Rogers proceeds:

'She was a Mallam's daughter,  
She lived at Sokoto,  
She didn't know what she ought to  
Till Bellamy taught her to.'

This brings down the house, nobody enjoying the joke more than Bellamy.

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Meanwhile the rebellion is increasing in extent at Burmi, near Bauchi. Companies of infantry have converged, and a punitive expedition has been dispatched from Lokoga under Major Marsh. Zunguru is excited. We are the 'clearing house for news' — the advanced base — and all around the fate of Nigeria seems in balance.

And then two bombs drop — two petty bombs.

A cable from home says that a V.C. has been awarded for Charlie Wells's show and that Charles has got nothing!

A stiff jump course has been erected.

'Give me a lead over those jumps, Pompey,' says Charles, a good horseman, as he hears the news. 'I'm fed up.'

Wells rides an untried horse Bebeji captured in the fight at that place. He goes round the two-miles course faultlessly — till the last fence; but then, having cleared a measured eighteen feet over open ditch, fence and water, falls and breaks his collar-bone! The price of disappointment!

'I felt,' says Charlie later, 'I had to break something — it might have been worse.'

'My dear fellow,' says Pompey, always sagacious, 'it will be all right — the King is bound to hear when he asks about it at the investiture.'

The second bomb is quite different. A message is received saying an official *accompanied by his wife* is

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expected to arrive shortly on his way up country. A white woman is to set foot in Zaria — true, there are missionaries not very far off but they are different. A *mem-sahib* in the Hausa states is a very different affair.

We talk it over. 'Let's hope she'll stay at the Residency,' says Charles. 'Anyhow we have no mess kit here save pyjamas. How will they do her?'

'Look here,' says Pompey — 'when this female arrives remember, *first*: try to curb your language at polo; if she is looking on, there is no need for b — and f —, and she wouldn't understand it. . . .'

'Hoo, hoo, hoo,' cries the Egg, 'wouldn't she?'

'Anyhow,' says Pompey, 'a nuisance though it may be; *second*, none of these women hanging round the huts and veranda; *third* see that the men don't hang about their lines washing with nothing on.'

The lady arrives . . . perhaps the first ever to arrive at Zaria, and with her arrives trouble.

Ash, the Resident, sends for me. There is a complaint. I sit down patiently to listen. 'Females,' I mutter — 'are right in their proper place.'

'You know my guests?' asks Ash with a smile. I nod.

'The lady objects to some of your officers walking about with no clothes on,' he says.

'*What?*' I exclaim in amazement, jumping up in my chair. 'Where?'

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'Oh — only in their huts and on their verandas,' says Ash apologetically.

'Can't they do that?' I ask. 'Why look?'

'You know what women are,' says Ash.

'Yes,' I reply. 'I know.'

'Well,' he answers, 'can anything be done?'

'Now look here, old chap,' I answer. 'This female's hut is over five hundred yards from our quarters. . . .'

'She says Bellamy sits in his bath and is sponged by a native woman and that. . . .'

'She must have a telescope,' I reply.

'She *has* and uses it,' says Ash seriously.

'Well tell her to copy Nelson . . . or better still the owl . . . and, better even than that, to clear out of this and leave us alone. She's too damned inquisitive,' I reply; and I add: 'Don't think I mind white women out here, but I do think they might leave their telescopes behind in England.'

'Like Fisher?' asks Ash. I shake my head.

'What's the yarn?' I say.

'Oh, nothing — old Jack Fisher, the Admiral, was caught looking into a girl's bedroom at Malta, across a street about ten yards wide, with a night glass — a telescope.'

'Hah, hah,' I laugh, 'I know Malta — I can visualize it; there admirals and generals are very hot stuff sometimes!'

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'Were you at Mount Nelson during the war?' asks Ash.

'Yes,' I say, 'only twice.'

'When I was there,' says Ash, 'the generals called it "the Mount anyone" — and acted accordingly, till Lord Kitchener stopped it . . . "a joke's a joke," said the great man, "but hang it this is a war."'

'Well, I must go,' I say — 'I'll help you, we'll stop the annoyance!'

'How?' asks Ash.

'We'll steal the telescope!'

As I'm shortly due to go home on leave Jim Mackenzie gives a dinner in my honour, and in order to help Charlie to forget his lost D.S.O., the collar-bone however served as a reminder.

The rebellion has been crushed at Burmi. Over a thousand Fulani were killed by Maxim gun fire in and around a mosque from which there was little or no escape, photographs of decapitated ringleaders being taken for distribution round the country — so as to convince the diehards of the futility of fighting.

Major Marsh, of the Royal West Kents, is killed by a poisoned arrow — a leg wound — in the hour of victory. But the Fulanis retain possession of the flag. What's their next move? All seems quiet — too quiet.

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'I feel convinced,' I say to Jim Mackenzie, 'a lot more M.I. blood will have to be spilt before we can say this country is conquered.'

At Jim's dinner we drink dry champagne, sing the latest songs and toast the missing flag, the Emir and 'the next show.'

'What's that?' I say: 'the fire alarm?'

Indeed it is a fire, and not far off. Fires in grass houses, like stones in glass ones, are dangerous.

We rush to the scene — the fire piquet under the orderly officer leading the way. There are no fire engines in Zaria.

'Bill's bungalow,' I remark.

'Bill's bungalow be damned,' shouts Bill rather 'on' — 'Bill's batman's brothel burnt by Bill.'

'Is that all,' remarks Jim, 'and you upset our party for that!'

As we walk across the parade ground alone, arm in arm, preceded by a lantern carrier, I ask Bill about the fire. 'You mustn't do it old chap,' I say, 'you might set fire to the whole camp.'

'You know that Sokoto girl Bellamy got into a mess about?' he replied. 'It was a put-up job — blackmail — I found the little bitch living with my orderly, so I set fire to the hut while they were inside. I don't think she'll try it on again. She got the fright of her life . . . the orderly had better be flogged for keeping a woman on unauthorized

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premises; . . . after all it was his duty to bring the little brute to me!

Next morning Charlie rushes in to my hut, in his pyjamas — all excitement — ‘I’ve got ’em, old man,’ he shouts, ‘snakes, hundreds of ’em.’

It’s 6 a.m. I regard Charles with amazement. Snakes! I think — He’s far gone — the last hopeless sign! Poor Charles! Who would have thought it?

‘Come and see for yourself,’ he says.

‘Go to hell,’ I say, ‘you’d better go slow!’

He gets annoyed.

‘I tell you,’ he says, ‘there’re hundreds of snakes crawling about on my vegetable marrow bed, they’ll be in my hut soon, it’s only twenty yards away *and in yours!*’

I gaze at him in abject bewilderment. Putting on gum boots I accompany him to the marrow bed.

There sure enough I see hundreds of dark crawling snakes intertwined with each other.

‘Have I got ’em too?’ I ask myself.

‘Alassen,’ I shout, ‘bring my gun.’

‘You can’t fire,’ says Charlie, ‘you’ll only stir ’em up and then — our beds, our boots, our breeches — oh Lor! snakes everywhere.’

‘How the devil did they get there?’ I ask.

‘I suppose,’ he replies, ‘they bred in the hot manure from the stables. I put down several loads

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of it and planted the marrow seeds — Look at the marrows, look at the size of 'em! *Colossal!*

'What's to be done?' I ask. 'It's most dangerous having these crawling things about the place near our huts — they're all fatal biters!'

'We must ring them in and burn them. I'll get all the kerosene oil I can from the quarter-bloke and tobacco juice — native tobacco — from the market at Zaria. They won't pass the tobacco, and we'll burn the lot, marrows and all,' says Charles.

That afternoon six cans of kerosene oil are poured over the marrow bed while a small trench is dug round it and filled with tobacco juice and water, a mixture made from the leaves of native tobacco supplied by the Emir.

The bonfire is lit — the flames leap high and snakes snakes, snakes, literally jump in the air and almost stand on end. Hundreds die, and it is as well. Not one escapes.

'So you thought I had 'em?' says Charles.

'You thought so yourself!' I reply, 'you said so.'

That afternoon we hold the first Jump Race meeting. On each race a selling sweep is held.

Jim Mackenzie buys the ticket for my pony — Gaia — for the 'catch weight race, owners up,' over two miles of hurdles, and wins. There is great rejoicing as, on the morrow, I am to leave for home.

Then comes tragedy. My Hausa farewell is

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spoilt. Poor Jim, eating a tin of bad food, is poisoned, and, being run down, *dies*. The gilt goes off the ginger-bread. I trek down along the newly cleaned cart track — the Lugard Road — recently prepared for bullock transport from India — sad — ‘it’s kismet’ — I remark, ‘Jim Mackenzie gone!’

At Lokoga things are much the same as they always are — polo, good cheer, good soldiering — but Mactier has died in Bornu, in the hour of great achievement in the realm of pacific settlement with the Emir Fadda Allah.

On the *Empire* — down river — my only fellow-passenger is a judge, also homeward bound. Of ‘big-wigs and full bottoms’ soldiers used to steer clear on the Niger in my time.

Yes, he’ll have a cocktail! — ‘just one — no more — thank you.’

We dine separately.

At bed-time Alassen places my cocktail stool, lime juice, whisky, and sparklets by the camp bedside.

The night is very hot as we are tied up near to a stuffy village.

In the dark hours of heat, silence, and unrest I want a drink — there is no glass — I’m half asleep — ‘Alassen,’ I shout, ‘glass’. ‘Ah, ah,’ I hear him mutter, ‘dis no good, me forget.’

He looks round for a glass and I see him in the dim light, seizing something and throwing its

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contents — water — into the river. After drinking, I fall off to sleep again.

Next morning, at cock crow, I am awakened by a deafening din — a legal argument!

*'Where are my false teeth,'* I hear the Judge repeating to his 'boy,' deliberately and inarticulately, word by word. Gum to gum the words come queerly.

I lie low — as does Alassen whose eyes meet mine — and, literally, beg silence!

The judge raises Cain. The ship is turned inside out and upside down. No teeth!

*'Better dredge the Niger!'* says the skipper to his Honour, not knowing how true he spoke.

That voyage home still recalls dental memories of a poor toothless Judge, all gums, disconsolate, sipping slops opposite me while I eat heartily at the captain's table.

The anchor is cast in Plymouth Sound at midnight. Cook's man, a customs official and a representative of the Board of Agriculture come on board with permit and papers for the landing and quarantining of my terrier Bee.

*'What a lot of fuss,'* says Ugly, whom I have not seen nor travelled with for two years since his expulsion from the Hotel at Las Palmas for misbehaving — *'No dog is worth it.'*

*'Some dirty dogs can land without permits,'* I reply.

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'What the hell do you mean?' he demands squaring up as if to fight.

'I mean exactly what I say,' I retort, turning on my heels — 'don't forget what the lady called you at Las Palmas!'

## CHAPTER X

### THE OLD BIRD DIES GAME

'I NEVER drink before sundown. Here's boo — first drink to-day, 5 p.m.' These words uttered with laudable pride by Tom Spindle, in the bush, on the way up to assume command of the M.I. at Zaria, fill me with youthful admiration.

Spindle of 'Sally' fame is now my Colonel. That's a change! We are trekking together — also John, an Engineer. Next morning we start early — by 5.15 a.m. we must be away — 'Colonel's orders.'

'Here's boo — First drink to-day, 5 a.m.' I remark to this new Colonel as we muster round a camp table at a none too communicative time in the morning. The Colonel eyes me — John sniggers — we all burst out laughing! . . .

The cart track is certainly an improvement on the old bush path — soon a railway will be laid down on that same track — soon a train will steam into Zaria — 'Not in our time, O Lord,' we pray.

The telegraph wire has also been laid during the time I have been on leave. That's a nuisance — it brings 'civilization' too close! It makes red tape and bureaucracy so very near. But still Tom Spindle

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for all the 'civilization' and red tape should be a very proud man. Where else in the world is to be found a permanent M.I. battalion of six companies — later raised to seven—well mounted and officered, well blessed with vets and quartermasters—two of each—a doctor who is also a poet — and — last but not least — a Colonel who is neither infantryman, cavalryman, nor sailor?

After the battle of Burmi five companies had been concentrated at Kano as there there is more forage. New ones, 'F' and 'G,' are to be raised at headquarters at Zaria. Spindle promotes me to raise F. Company and I am grateful — much-needed inches thereby being added to my needy stature! 'After all,' I say, 'it's not so bad — a temporary captain after four years' service, in days when the army is small and temporary rank rare. But how expensive!'

That 'extra pip' is to cost a lot of money!

'Promotion is neither bought nor sold,' says one of my subalterns, the Old Bird, 'but you've damned well got to pay for it! I'll see to that!' And he did!

'Here am I,' says the Old Bird, 'a junior subaltern at thirty-four, too old to learn ("they say") two young to die, saluting a little — half my size and age — O my Gawd — he's *got* to pay!'

The wetting of the pip — 'the proper thing to do' — in the words of the ballad, is in the Old Bird's

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hands. He knows about these things. Has he not planted tea in Ceylon, rushed to the Klondyke for gold; mixed drinks in the bar at a mining town, speculated in oil and real estate and — loved and played with the highest in the land? Is he not equally at home in a Mayfair drawing room, the promenade at the 'Empire,' a Belgravia boudoir or a mud hut at Zaria? Has he not done most things worth doing?

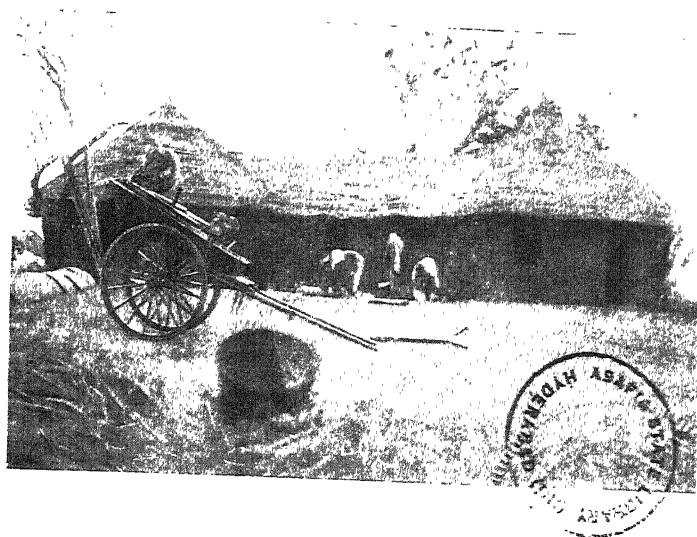
Charlie Wells is, so the telegraph operator says, on his way up — 'damn these telegraph wires! We'll defer the wetting till Charles arrives,' I say to the Old Bird, 'you don't know Charles.'

Rumour has it that Charles is driving up on the cart track in a dogcart brought out from home specially by him. Can it be true? And that he has a hundred pounds' worth of stores — mostly delicacies! 'He must be very rich,' whispers Huggins reverently. 'He must be a damned idiot,' says the Old Bird loudly. The difference between two men!

Charles does drive up. The first trap to be driven in Zunguru appears from the direction of the Residency at Zaria, and is escorted to camp by an admiring throng of gaping natives. Never before have these people seen wheels — they've still a lot to learn at Zaria, Kano, and the other places!

'Do you realize,' says Carr — the vet 'that our apes — at least hundreds of them — never saw a camel

## TRANSPORT—NEW AND OLD



*Above :* Lieut. C. L. Wells's dogcart, the first in Northern Nigeria,  
at a Rest House on the Road to Zaria.

*Below :* Carriers drawing water at a well.



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nor ostrich till those who fought at Kano and Sokoto saw them clearing off the field as fast as they could go? Do you know that the two camels taken by the Bull Pup from the Burmi gang were novelties to the Yorubas? Do you know when the troops first encountered hailstones at Zaria and locusts at Kano — things they had never seen before — they thought the end of the world was at hand? Remember troops from the Niger, on reaching here, were almost as far from Lokoga as London is from Marseilles!

‘Your pow-wow is mighty interesting,’ says the Old Bird, ‘but can you explain to me, why if London is so far from Scotland and Zaria is so far from Lokoga and both journeys are about the same for traders, I can buy a case of whisky in London as cheap as I can in Scotland while, in this damned place, I have to add ten shillings per case for transport to the price I pay at Zunguru?’

‘Yes, my dear old bird, I can explain,’ says old man Carr, not seriously but feigning seriousness. ‘The Niger Company being wealthy and philanthropic not only wishes you to save your life and money for better and less dangerous things but also has the interests of the Zunguru men at heart lest you drink them dry. They know you —’

‘Is that why Spindle never drinks during the daytime?’ asks Fendall innocently.

‘Don’t be an ass,’ says the Old Bird, ‘as if that

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makes any difference. What he misses by day he makes up for at night. It's a pure pose.'

'And a very good pose too,' says the doctor. 'He knows what he's about. This day-time drinking spells death.'

'Well,' says Charles, having pulled up at my hut, 'when you've all finished talking rot you might give me a drink—I have no scruples about drinking when I'm really thirsty.'

Later we examine Charles's 'kit'—A whole trap which can be carried in four loads, £100 worth of tinned food, two fig trees, a load of seed potatoes, vegetable and flower seeds galore, an expensive camera, guns, rifles, saddles, a gramophone and records, a cold shoeing outfit, tool box, tooth extractor, and countless other things—all his. 'I want to try this tooth extractor on someone,' says Charles, 'so when you have a case let me know, doctor.'

'What booze have you got?' asks the Old Bird—'we're nearly out of bubbly.'

'D'you know what the natives call you?' asks Charles. The Old Bird shakes his head.

'Jarn Fiscar'—'Red Face,' says Charles, 'how do you think you got that?'

'Looking for frozen whisky in Nigeria and thinking I was in the Klondyke,' replies the old man, 'till I found a mug who had come up three hundred and fifty miles on cold tea!'

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The party melts as the long lanky form of Spindle is seen in the distance walking back to his quarters from orderly room.

'If there's one thing I'd hate,' says the Old Bird, 'it would be for Tom Spindle to catch me out tight.'

'He may do yet!' I answer.

'Wine or women,' says the Old Bird, 'which? I love 'em both . . . but I've an idea the whisky you know may be better than the woman you don't know. What d'you say, kid?'

'Why ask me?' I reply — 'you always say I know nothing about either!'

There is a great deal of bustle about — a flutter in the dovecots. Spindle is on the war path. 'New brooms sweep clean,' says the Old Bird. 'Can't we wear the ruddy broom out? Spindle's all right after 6 o'clock, but till then I call him a bloody Puritan!'

'Well,' says Carr, 'he's a Cromwell, I suppose.'

'I shouldn't advise you to try to wear the broom out,' I say.

'I can't understand the man,' says the O.B. (old bird) 'making a hell of a row in the lines about that dead horse Bull Pup didn't know about —'

'I tried hard to hide it,' says Carr.

'What did he say to you, skipper?' asks the O.B.

'Say,' I answer, 'he didn't talk, he foamed! Some tongue! But Mac's face was the best — standing there as if he'd swallowed a ramrod — I tell you

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lads, it was a first class demonstration of a first class spleen let loose on to a first class opportunity — one of those that comes only once in a lifetime! I haven't got over it yet. I'll probably get tight on the strength of it before dinner —'

'And then,' says the O.B., 'you'll be "run" again if you don't keep clear of mess — some men are *such* asses! they can *never* keep away. Look at me — if I know I'm not very well I *go to bed*.'

'You go to hell, O.B.,' I say, 'you're often half tight — one day you'll be caught.'

Some days later an orderly comes to my quarters to say I am wanted at the orderly room.

'Crikey,' says the Old Bird, 'what's the poor little —— in for now?' 'Good luck,' he shouts as I jump on my pony.

'The Chief,' says the Colonel, 'is going up the Benue to Yola and from there to Lake Chad. You will take half your company to Bornu and meet him. You will escort H.E. back to Kano. You will be away about three months. You will start to-morrow. John is going up with the Chief. Wire to him to take up stores for your consumption.' I salute and retire.

I have a gun and heaps of ammunition, so all I require is flour for bread, some biscuits, a pound or two of tea, tinned vegetables, and some tinned meat, whisky and gin.

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Estimating for two months — I shall take a month to reach the rendezvous, I wire John to bring up stores. For once the telegraph line is useful.

‘I see,’ says the Colonel who has franked my telegram, ‘you’re going to live on gin and whisky!’

‘No sir,’ I reply, ‘I’m going to live on fresh food and perhaps bring some of the booze back to Zaria for you! You see, I shall encounter many souls just as thirsty as some of us are here sometimes *after sundown!*’

The occasion of the arrival of Charlie Wells, is in addition to my promotion and forthcoming departure for Chad, made the excuse for a glorious bust in the mess, at my expense. ‘Sally’ is sung in the orthodox manner after which ‘boys’ escort many masters to bed. Some fall into the big drain by the wayside.

Alas — next morning things are not so good, as the order for my departure is cancelled owing to the cursed telegraph wires conveying an amended order for the Colonel (instead of me), to meet the High Commissioner, high policy of defence and location in the Bornu Region having to be settled. My luck is out.

‘I tell you what we’ll do,’ says one of the lads of the village at cocktail time, ‘these damned wires are no good; they let in the lunatics and red tape, so we’ll get them cut periodically down the line. They

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will think the niggers are doing it, and perhaps they'll send us out to stop it!'

For months on end the telegraph wires are mysteriously cut—the political officers cannot understand it—the soldiers do not try to; it has nothing to do with them!—only one man knew the real secret.

'I must say,' says Charles, 'the station is a much better place to live in when the line is down!'

It so happens that a few nights before the departure of the Colonel for Bornu some of us ride over to the Residency area to dine. The moon being full and the track broad, it is decided, after dinner, that we race back to camp for a prize—first over the stream to be the winner—a two-miles scurry, go as you please.

No one ever found out exactly what did happen. My pony may have crossed his legs, put his foot in a hole, or stumbled, as the track was very rough, but the man to receive the prize, 'First over the stream,' was old Carr who rode helter skelter to fetch a stretcher on which to carry me! As I lay unconscious in the dust, white men, 'well oiled,' stood around, gaping! I was told later that, after a stretcher and a cursing doctor had been procured, a procession was formed, headed by George Condon, of blessed memory, whereupon I was carried back to camp to the tune of the Dead March in Saul played by

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George on a mouth organ. Such was night life in Zaria five-and-twenty years ago, while history was being made.

As he starts for Chad, Tom Spindle looks in to say *au revoir* as I sit in the veranda of my quarters, with head swathed in bandages, the Old Bird beaming on the beer while Alassen dispenses hospitality and the dog Bee looks up as much as to say 'Again?'

'Won't you break your rule?' I ask — 'Well,' says Tom Spindle, 'all good rules are made to be broken sometimes; just a spot, Alassen.'

'He's all right,' says the Old Bird as we watch the Colonel start on his long trek — 'bark's worse than the bite, but I'm d——d if I want to be bitten.'

There is talk of a German war at this period and our Mounted task in case of such an eventuality is seriously considered. Naturally all thoughts fly back to South Africa — the thrusters of those days will no doubt be the leaders of the German show. We each back our fancy and discuss the chances. Plumer, Rawlinson, Haig, Gough, Ian Hamilton, Kitchener (the elder and the younger), French, De Lisle, Thorneycroft, Smith-Dorrien, Rimington, and others are names we all know. As each name is suggested heads are nodded or shaken according to the merits of the case. Regimental officers of the regular class have a wonderful gift of recognizing

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their leaders. At Zaria in the far back days every officer who had served in South Africa might have backed his fancy, one, two, three — Kitchener, Plumer, Smith-Dorrien for 'the next war.'

'And remember,' said Carr, the vet., 'it is not all a question of leadership or knowledge — bombast, pomp, and drink must be absent, selfishness must be non-existent and ability to "do without" must be ever present — humility conquers arrogance' . . . arrogance and greed lost us battles in France.

'I know one battle in South Africa,' said Fendall, 'where lack of port led to defeat!'

'Men,' said Carr, 'like horses should be trained to go and do without. How can a man who has been habitually "doing himself well," do well when he is suddenly left without his drink and pork pies?'

The Colonel away, command of the station falls on the next senior, which is me.

My new company gains in efficiency. Riding school, mounted drill, musketry and routine duties successfully accomplished, we spend long days under field service conditions in the neighbouring bush preparing for the inevitable clash with the ex-Emir which I feel must one day come, the Flag being still in possession of the disgruntled Fulani 'rebels' who are known to be in the wild desolate region between Zaria and Sokoto, dispersed and 'friendly.' To all outward appearances calm reigns over the land,

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but 'bazaar rumour' and hints dropped by traders and native horse copers is to the effect that 'war' will come our way soon.

The auctions of doped horses suffering from horse sickness yet looking very fit, after a course of treatment in the sick lines, afford great sport to us and even satisfaction to the native buyers! Little do these simple men — men not quite always so simple, know they are buying 'doomed cast offs' whose dates of death can be accurately predicted by the 'horse doctors!' Yet they are satisfied as they have always been used to horses dying like flies annually — and only attribute their losses to bad luck and Allah!

'We must,' says Brer Fox, 'keep *our* death rate down, and the sales money buys us good remounts on the quiet; the Treasury is always grumbling at the expense of M.I.'

So insistent is the rumour that trouble is ahead — a rumour credited by the Resident — that a mobile column is organized, ready to start at an hour's notice with pack transport complete, and this I am to command.

One night, after a festive party at the mess, we are advised by the civil authority to place sentries at our doors while we sleep, as the Emir of Zaria has reported that the fugitive Fulani Emir has plotted to murder all the white men in their beds!

'Murder me!' says the Old Bird cheerfully —

## FIVE YEARS HARD

'What odds! Anyhow these d——d civilians have cold feet, and everyone knows the Burmi show bust up the bad gang.'

'Don't you be too sure,' I say.

'Well, I want a show anyhow,' says the old man, 'so I hope you're right. Don't forget I haven't got a medal yet, and all you fellows have three or four.'

In consequence of insubordination shown to an Assistant Resident by the head man of a town some twenty-four miles distant I am dispatched to 'put the fear of God into him.'

'What does that mean?' I ask.

'No shooting — not a shot — that's honest — unless, of course, in self-defence — no humbug, mind you — but bring him and some of his leading men in to me and I'll deal with him,' says the Resident, 'it's a civil job, and I have no police.'

We skirmish up to the village on horseback, and secure the gates. The interpreter enters with me and my escort. There is no resistance. The 'king' comes out and later goes to 'quod.'

On return to camp I am astonished to see a huge multitude of natives drawn up in a semi-circle on the polo ground. Charles seems to be in command. 'What's up?' I say, as I gallop towards him.

I see two rather dejected-looking handcuffed natives standing beside the doctor.

'Here, I'm busy checking mess stores,' says

## THE OLD BIRD DIES GAME

Charles, 'you do it! These civilian sartars (thieves) are to have 'twenty-four of the best' by the Judge's orders for looting in soldiers' uniform, and he has sent 'delegates' to see the fun. Don't forget to count the strokes!' he shouts out as he gallops off.

Shrieks rise above the murmurs of the onlookers as each stroke tells its tale. Twenty-four — six on one side of the back, six on the other, six on the rump, six on the calves of the legs.

'Ah,' says Alassen later rubbing his hands (for all the 'boys' have been roped into the audience for their instruction), 'that Dundara sargie-major he beat fine — too much.'

Our calm and quiet is disturbed by the arrival of an inspecting staff from England, but being past-masters in the art of eye-wash and adepts in the craft of covering up the defects, we survive. England knows little of what goes on in the tropics.

And then I have a trot round on patrol.

All is quiet save for the sound of single shot rifle fire! What is it? Only me, reader, innocently shooting marabouts. I bag six whisky cases full of feathers. As the birds sit in trees I pot them off with a rifle, hitting each in the body well 'forrard' — so as to preserve the plumes.

On return to Zaria there is trouble. As slaughter for feathers for my female friends at home is illegal — the Resident, a truculent fellow, is after me. He

## FIVE YEARS HARD

wants my blood *and* the feathers! He will confiscate them — six whisky cases full! 'Oh dear no,' I say, 'you too have friends at home. Report me if you like, fine me if you will, but my feathers are on their way home' (hidden under Charles's bed!).

Later Charlie marches East. He too wants feathers. 'I know a better way than yours,' he says to me prior to his departure.

Arriving at Kano he asks the Resident to dinner and later shows the good man case after case of feathers! There is a row. 'You're not allowed to shoot any,' he says.

'I know,' says Charles, 'but I didn't!'

'How did you manage?' asks Fendall; 'salt on their tails?'

The Resident is furious at such levity.

'No,' says Charles slowly, 'I saturated a lot of guinea corn and meat in trade gin and made the blighters drunk — they loved it! They all got paralytic and then I pulled the feathers out — it didn't hurt them. Next morning, instead of swaggering about with plumes so gay they were leaning up against the tree trunks holding their heads!'

It was quite true that Charles did make the marabouts drunk, but it was equally true that the Resident spent quite a lot of time in trying to prove that he didn't, but never again were officers accused of 'shooting' anything.

## THE OLD BIRD DIES GAME

'I believe,' says the Old Bird, 'if I told him I'd doped an elephant and then pulled out his tusks he'd believe me!'

A report of unrest in the direction of Sokoto necessitates my departure with the mobile column at high speed, accompanied by the Old Bird; but all is well, the only casualty being the O.B. himself who returns to Zaria with a terrible toothache and no doctor to attend to it.

'This is my chance,' says Charles, 'I'll try my tooth extractor' — and he did.

We all help. Doping the O.B. like a marabout — an easier task — Charles fixes the claws of the extractor round the offending tooth while we hold and strap the patient down . . . then . . . as if extracting a nail, Charles winds up the end, when, lo and behold, a huge three-fanged tooth appears, and is later corked up in alcohol and preserved as a relic of the past.

'What was it like?' I ask the O.B. next day.

'The whisky saved me,' he replies, 'because, although it hurt like hell I felt more like scrapping with you than bothering about anything else, but look at the cut the strap has made under my ear! I expect I felt like that baboon old Carr castrated on the table in the old mess!'

'Good job it was only a tooth!' says Charles.

'Well, I've a job for you to-morrow,' I say, 'an

## FIVE YEARS HARD

officer and fifty men are to go to Pisseri — thirty miles away. I can't leave the station as the chief may turn up any day. You've never been in the bush alone with troops — good practice.'

'I've *what?*' he exclaims.

'It's true,' I say. 'Put out outposts, etc., just as if you were in a disturbed area — water and feed with observation posts out, etc., — all military precautions.'

'What have I got to do?' he asks.

'Bring in a murderer — the king's got him, I believe, and all the witnesses, see you get 'em all.'

Four days later the Old Bird arrives back dragging a naked bushman attached to a heel rope and deposits him at the guardroom.

'You're just in time,' I shout from the orderly room. 'The chief has arrived and is dining in mess to-night.'

When we assemble in the ante-room, waiting to receive his Excellency before dinner, it is obvious that the Old Bird, who arrives late, has been celebrating his expedition. As I am commanding the station I feel a certain amount of responsibility in the matter.

'Go to bed,' I whisper as we go in to dinner, but he takes no notice. Drunk men seldom do!

During dinner I keep glancing at the Old Bird

## THE OLD BIRD DIES GAME

with some anxiety. He's not drinking, but the various courses are proving difficult.

What do I see, towards the end of dinner? Can it be true? He's gone to sleep!

There is a lull in the conversation—one of those unfortunate lulls which inevitably occur when someone says something awful.

'Haw, haw,' bursts on our ears! He snores!

Charles evidently kicks under the table, for the sleeper starts, looks round, catches my eye and pulls himself together.

'Tired?' asks the political secretary, kindly.

'No,' replies the Old Bird, closing one eye, 'Tight!'

Next morning I visit the Old Bird's bungalow on my way to parade. He's just mounting his pony.

'The Chief wants to see you at 9 a.m.,' I say.

Thunderstruck, he gallops down to the company lines to call the parade to attention for me.

Parade over, breakfast endured, the O.B. waits for me outside.

'Are you coming with me?' he asks demurely. I nod.

We walk over to the Chief's camp together—half a mile away in silence. As we reach the confines I halt and look at the victim.

'What d'you think he'll do?' he asks anxiously. I shrug my shoulders. 'Say a man of your age—twice my age I believe—should know how to hold his liquor,' I say—'and —'

## FIVE YEARS HARD

‘And what?’ he asks.

‘Send you home!’

‘I can’t go home,’ he replies, ‘I owe my tailor too much!’

‘Look here, “young ’un” ’ I say — ‘he doesn’t want to see you: it’s my way of teaching you a lesson, see?’

‘You — little —,’ he replies, ‘adding years to my life! I must go and get a b. and s. or I’ll never be able to get through stables. But I’m sorry I let the battalion down last night.’

A few hours later the Old Bird, commanding a travelling escort, rides nobly to the boundary beyond the Residency with the Chief, ruminating over his luck while I walk over to Charles’s garden, a wonderful show — flowers, vegetables, potatoes in profusion — the first good garden at Zaria.

‘These two fig trees are doing well,’ he says. ‘I wonder how big they’ll be in thirty years’ time?’

‘I wonder where we’ll be in *ten* years,’ I answer.

\* \* \*

The Colonel returns and is pleased with progress. Things are humdrum save for the polo which is good, as we are all well mounted and exercise a call on troop horses as well — on payment of a small charge for extra forage.

There have been some hectic nights on the top

## THE OLD BIRD DIES GAME

of hard working days. As the outcome of one of these, on Spindle's suggestion — there being a shortage of forage owing to famine — we raid the sleepy Residency at dawn, for guinea corn, and bring back enough to feed all our horses for a week. The outcome of this enterprise causes annoyance to our civil rulers, but, after sending the money for the 'stolen' goods and 'apologizing' there is a convivial gathering when all is forgiven.

Spindle's time is nearly at an end, and just before his departure the Old Bird 'stumbles badly' — and, to use his own expression, 'cops it in the neck.'

We are all sitting at Spindle's bungalow, after polo, drinking cocktails. The first mess bugle sounds whereupon all depart to tub and change. The Old Bird seems a bit wobbly but he's not the only one.

Half an hour later the bowing and sedate scraping begins in the ante-room before dinner.

'Good evening, sir' — 'Good evening.'

'Good evening' — 'Good evening' — (wonderful fellows all!)

'Mess' is a 'parade' — 'cocktails' half an hour before is not, but it's best not to miss them if a good mark is desired! Into this sedate parade — the 'sherry and bitters salute,' barges the Old Bird, late, florid, stumbling, manfully doing his best but obviously as drunk as an owl. The fat is in the fire!

## FIVE YEARS HARD

To stumble from 'cocktails' into bed is not only damned funny but sensible! To be drunk on 'parade' is a very different matter! The Old Bird is hustled off, after some difficulty and, later, I receive an order to place him under open arrest — when sober.

At 9 a.m. I walk over to his house — next door to mine — to fetch him to the Justice Hall (the orderly room) where justice reigns.

'I must have a brandy,' says the O.B., 'to face this firing party — Spindle will give me hell.'

'Well,' says the O.B. that evening at cocktails, 'I didn't mind being sworn at by him, I didn't mind anything he said but what I can't stick is being bowled over and defeated by Spindle! That hurts me. It's against my tradition. I was brought up to carry my liquor like a gentleman, not to get bowled over like a psalm singer.'

'It's the damned system that's all wrong,' says Brer Fox, 'N.S.T.B. as a battalion motto! Swizzle sticks as a regimental emblem! "lashions" of cocktails swallowed by mere children before dinner in the presence of and with the approval of their elders; it's O.K. if they get to bed before dinner or weather the storm, but arrest if they barge into mess! —'

'D'you call me a child?' asks the O.B. indignantly, 'I'm as old as Carr and Spindle —'

'Yes,' says Brer, 'and you therefore ought to know better.'

## THE OLD BIRD DIES GAME

'What's N.S.T.B.?' asks Fuller, a missionary on his way to Katagum.

'Never shirk the booze!' replies Brer.

Fuller's face is a study — his jaw drops.

'Cheer up, Sky Pilot,' laughs Perkins, 'we're bored, not bad. Read this and then think whether it's sound to try to convert niggers before you've screwed the wings on the White men.'

Fuller reads. 'It is forbidden for European officials to keep native women. Any officer, British N.C.O. or Civilian official contracting V.D. will forfeit pay and allowances when under treatment.'

The parson's head drops in shame. Slowly rising in silence he creeps towards his tent.

'Poor chap — a bit hurt,' says Perkins, while all join in the ribald laughter. But there was another reason — Fuller, devout priest, was standing in torment in front of his Maker — a convicted hypocrite. He kept a woman in Africa and a wife in Wales.

At last the time comes for Tom Spindle to depart for ever from the land of life, liquor, and hard living. The whole garrison escorts him to the old camp at the Residency. 'Three cheers' I shout as the Hausa Farewell sounds, and the apes and their 'betters' take up the cry. A genuine demonstration of regret at the breaking of a bond.

He turns about and, erect in saddle, salutes.

## FIVE YEARS HARD

'There goes a damned good fellow,' says the Old Bird.

'The survival of the fittest,' I reply.

As we ride back to camp the medical dispenser tells me Fuller, the missionary, is on his way down invalided — suffering from V.D.

'Isn't it awful,' he says, 'and he a priest.'

'It's worse,' I reply, 'I suppose, for a God's man pretending to be good, but really it's bad luck and being found out . . . after all, bishops and barbers are only human!'

Three months pass.

Charles Wells takes another toss, and as well as breaking some ribs, strains his heart. For some time he has been doctorless and has bandaged himself up. Eventually he's invalided home and out of the service.

'I'm glad I'm going home, Pup,' he says shaking my hand as he settles himself in his trap, the only trap in Nigeria. 'It's a tragedy — the whole place has gone to pot since Spindle left. You remember the dinner we had in my hut and the sing-song when the little swine dined all alone in mess and sent over a chit to tell us to stop singing?' I nod.

'What d'you think he said next day? I forgot to tell you.'

I shrug my shoulders.

'It was after polo. I'd cursed him during the game for hanging over the ball in his fiddling way. He

## THE OLD BIRD DIES GAME

said I wasn't to swear at my *superiors* — at polo, mark you!

'*Superiors!*' I say laughingly, 'how damned amusing.'

'Anyhow,' says Charles, 'see you in Town, we'll make up a party for Ascot if I'm fit.'

Exit Charles from soldiering — but not before he's got a bit of his own back on 'his superior' by laying him out 'speechless' with a doctored cocktail before dinner.

'It wasn't a thing I liked doing,' said Charles, 'but I saw no other way of teaching him a lesson . . . I asked him how he was next morning before I left for home, but he only showed his teeth and grinned his sickly grin. "You should treat yourself to a corpse reviver, old man," I shouted, as I drove away.'

At this time a peculiar thing happened. The Niger Company Stores at Zunguru being burnt down, in it perished all books, accounts, and records. Our mess bills for months had been paid by individuals, but the mess cheque for stores was burnt! The Niger Company, apparently satisfied, wrote off their loss or recovered from insurance. *Someone* made hundreds of pounds! 'Who wouldn't be a mess president?' said the Old Bird!

\* \* \*

## FIVE YEARS HARD

'There seems to be a spate of devilry on here,' I say to the Old Bird one afternoon.

'You saw the chit last night, on receipt of which I sounded the test alarm for the Flying Column to fall in?'

'Yes, of course,' he replies.

'D'you know what they're saying now?' I say. 'They say I made it all up!'

'But you've got the chit?' replies the O.B.

'No — I can't find it — I think Alassen burnt it.'

'James is very bad,' says the Old Bird, 'he came in from Kano last night — they've taken his weapons away from him in case he tries to do himself in — D.T.'s I suppose — he misses Spindle — he'll be all right once he gets away.'

'Marcus arrives from Sokoto to-day on his way home,' I say. 'Good fellow, Marcus. I haven't seen him since S.A. We must do him well. He's had a rotten time at Sokoto — at least as rotten as he would ever allow it to be.'

A few days later the doctor comes over to my quarters. I've been seedy.

'Sorry to tell you,' he says, 'you'll lose the Old Bird — I've to send him home *at once*, or he'll lose his sight. He's beyond me. And what about you yourself, how long have you to go for leave?'

'Six weeks,' I reply.

'Stick it out,' he says, 'you're full of malaria.'

## THE OLD BIRD DIES GAME

Champagne may buck you up for the time being but you had better go very slow. Remember this — you're the last of the old crowd — the rest have nothing in common with you. Take ten days' local leave just before you're due to leave here; ten days to get to Zunguru — that's twenty days; a week from Zunguru to Forcados, that's twenty-seven — why, man, you need only stay here a couple of weeks more. I'll go to the orderly room and see about it; they can't say "no" to the M.O.!

Thanks to the M.O. I start off on ten days' leave and trek down to Zunguru via Gerko and Kaduna — an unbeaten track — in order to get into the hartebeeste country for shooting. I'm not alone, for the fox terrier, Bee — the dog with a medal — has survived.

'How did she get a medal?' asks the Old Bird one day — 'I haven't got one yet!'

'The medal rolls for the Kano show were being made out in the orderly room when I was adjutant. The dog was always in the office with me, and my old orderly-room sergeant was a bit of a wag and liked the dog — so he stuck her name in: 'Private Bhee Kahlm.' The Mint knew no better!

There is no Hausa Farewell at Zaria — the new regime forbids such things — Zaria lost its sense of humour when Spindle went away. But good shooting and life among the primitives and unspoilt

## FIVE YEARS HARD

gives a fillip to a tired body and rest to a tormented soul.

\* \* \*

At Zunguru I visit the native market with Alassen, to buy curios.

Seeing a piece of ivory I fancy it. 'How much?' I ask.

'Seven pounds!'

'Don't talk rubbish,' I reply, and then my eyes fall on a face I haven't seen for nearly two years.

'Abubukr!' I exclaim. He craves my silence.

'Tell him to come and see me at my quarters,' I say to Alassen, 'tell him I go home to-morrow and if he doesn't come this evening, bath time, I'll tell the police and have him arrested.'

While I am having my tub Alassen announces Abubukr, to whom I talk in Hausa.

'I thought you were dead?' I ask.

'I am,' he replies, 'I'm Momadu Keffi now.'

'Why so? How came you not to die at the white man's hands at Rufari?'

'The white man dug a big pit underneath a tree. He tied a long rope round my neck and tied the other end to a branch. Then he sat me on the branch. He called the villagers. To them he said, 'Behold! Abubukr, the thief-murderer is going to die — I'll hang him! All were glad as they were to get Abubukr's deferred pay! "Jump," said the officer. Abubukr jumped and

## THE OLD BIRD DIES GAME

fell "dead" into the pit and lay on the bottom, death-like and motionless, face down, and the white man cut the rope. Then the officer stood on the edge of the pit and told all the villagers to look in at the dead thief-murderer. It was nearly dark. Then he said to the villagers "I will fill in the pit in the night." When it was dark I untied the rope, ran to the bush and the soldiers filled in the pit. All men were pleased. The villagers were pleased, they got the money. The soldiers were pleased I was not dead. The officer was pleased as he liked Abubukr and Abubukr was very very pleased as he wanted to live.'

'Good-bye, Momadu Keffi,' I say for I too liked Abubukr and had found his execution just but difficult.

Shortly after arrival home I met Bellamy at the old Empire.

'What did you do with that fellow Abubukr?' I asked.

'Executed him of course,' he replied.

'Hah, hah, that's good,' I said, 'have another after that! I saw him at Zungurul!'

'Oh, I believe there was some business about the rope being too long or something,' he replied, 'but I was satisfied that the sentence had been carried out in the spirit if not in the actual letter, and that the villagers were impressed with British justice. After all that was the real thing that mattered.'

## FIVE YEARS HARD

A week at Zunguru to square up accounts with the Treasury — a dull week, for all the old hands have gone and prigs and prudes reign where once 'The Rat' and Spindle set the pace . . . leaves sadness in the heart.

Zunguru is unpopular. A new camp on virgin soil, the newly turned earth and thick bush around breeds mosquitoes and malaria. The graveyard is filling quickly!

Still, some of the *civilians* raise energy for a champagne 'send off' at the 'railway station.' The soldiers are not game!

Old Stingo runs the 'send off' — the last of the Mohicans comes up to the scratch — and — as the train steams out he sings the new refrain, champagne glass in one hand and a baton in the other, to the tune of 'Slattery's Mounted Foot'. Across the bush we hear the chorus:

'And down to Wushishi

By the early morning train

Went a few benighted buffers

Who were drinking free champagne

The band was playing *hunkalee*\*

In honour of the few

Who felt so well

They ran like hell

From ruddy Zunguru!

\* Hausa for 'softly.'

## THE OLD BIRD DIES GAME

A few years later the capital was moved from Zunguru to Kaduna — but Stingo never saw it. He hated Zunguru but he left his bones there.

At Lokoga, on the day of my arrival news is received that Binger had died of 'fever' in the bush far from any white man and unattended by medical skill, alone, save for the presence of his boy and Hausa soldiers who buried him. 'Poor old Binger — it seems as if it was inevitable — peculiarly enough he funk'd the issue always but supplied the means,' I say to Julian Hasler now in command.

On board ship, homeward bound, I find myself at the Captain's table with a Colonial Governor sitting opposite me and a Director of Education on my right.

'This is the limit,' I say to the educational expert, 'I'd rather be at a lively table — not that Governors aren't sometimes lively — one I once travelled with was a high stepper.'

'Can't move now,' he replies. 'You see H.E. selected his eating partners, and I suppose as you are a Captain in the Waffs he thought you'd like it and be proud! But it's much worse for me, he's my Governor, he knows me (or thinks he does). I like beer for breakfast on board . . . I think the old man would have a fit if he saw his *educational* Director drinking beer for breakfast. . . !'

'Get your steward to put it in a teapot and pour

## FIVE YEARS HARD

it out as tea into a cup, slowly,' I reply. 'He'll never know.'

'Good idea,' says the education expert. The ruse at first succeeds, but one morning I am earlier than usual for breakfast and the steward is a new one. The Director of Education has not yet arrived. His Excellency will have tea. His tea is poured out and to it he adds sugar and condensed milk. There is a rush to the side — a vomiting noise. All is panic, consternation and commotion! 'Has his Excellency been poisoned?' is on every lip.

'Take that teapot and cup and throw them overboard *at once*,' I say to the baffled steward, after which I warn the Director of Education to steer clear and have his breakfast in his cabin.

'The old boy seems a bit washed out,' I say to the smoking room crowd that night, 'but fancy tea, condensed milk *and* sugar! it serves him right.'

'You know who he thinks it was meant for?' says the Director of Education.

'Me, I should think,' I reply.

'That's right,' says the D.E., 'he has no humour — he's going to report the matter to the Colonial office!'

'Well, soldiers have broader backs than civilians as a rule,' I say, 'so let him carry on, I'm not returning.'

At Plymouth I hand over the dog Bee, for the last time to the care of the quarantine authorities . . . the severity of the English winter killed her.

## THE OLD BIRD DIES GAME

Six months later Charles Wells, the Old Bird, and I sit at one of the small tables in the Empire lounge, Charlie has been invalided out . . . The Old Bird's eyes are not much better but 'that damned tailor' demanded cash or a return to the bush where 'money is saved.' I am on home service.

'Anyhow, Old Bird,' I say, 'you'll probably get my company, it's fit to go out on detachment now — if you're at Sokoto you'll be on your own, and you may even have a show. Pompey Green is at Kano — one of the old gang — and will be in command of the battalion. The dud clique is bust up.'

Finishing up in the early hours we say *au revoir* to the Old Bird while he tries for the sixth time to climb Eros and thereon place his hat. Eros to the Old Bird is London: London is life — and he possesses *joie de vivre* to the full.

Three months later I am staying with Charlie Wells in the North Midlands.

I'm tubbing — the water splashes — it's difficult to hear: was that a knock? I listen — it's Charles's voice outside.

'Listen,' he says, 'the Old Bird, two other white men, residents or something, and the whole of your old company have been scuppered to a man at Satiru near Sokoto while making a demonstration.'

'It's the damned old Emir,' I say, 'that damned flag again. I'll be out in a second.'

## FIVE YEARS HARD

'February 19th,' I think, as I boil myself, 'just five years since I left Dickinson at Muragi — five years hard — what a lot has happened since!'

'I'll be bound,' I say at breakfast, 'the Old Bird didn't understand the situation. I bet he trusted the — civilians at Satiru — where he fired his first and last shot in anger. Result — my company, raised less than two years ago, completely wiped out!'

'Yes, but what about our prestige?' asks Charles. 'The whole country will be up! Three white men and their kit, a hundred or so rank and file, their horses, saddlery, ammunition and rifles, such a thing has never happened in *Northern* Nigeria before.'

'No,' I agree 'and will never happen again, I'll be bound. Wait till Pompey Green gets loose among 'em from Kano.'

'What are you going to do?' he asks.

'Go to the Colonial office at once and volunteer for special service. It's my company after all, or at least it was.'

The Colonial office are kind. Yes, if special service officers are sent I will be sent, but it depends on the situation. Naturally they hope for the best and that the flames will not spread. It much depends on the behaviour of the Emir of Sokoto; if he falls off on the right side of the fence all will be well . . . if he throws the dice and tries to restore Fulani rule

## THE OLD BIRD DIES GAME

then there will be a big show. The next month will tell, less perhaps.

Meanwhile I cable to Pompey Green to remember the Emir's green flag.

\* \* \*

In Nigeria things moved quickly. The Emir of Sokoto, having wisely declared for British rule, assumed responsibility for the protection of British life and property at Sokoto and in the area.

Pompey Green is not slow. Cutting the telegraph wires to headquarters, lest 'they' should 'try to stop him' he treks across the Hausa states in record time and 'pins the rebels down' thus justifying the existence of M.I. (no infantry could ever have accomplished Green's march in the time) and eventually joins up with a punitive expedition from Zunguru for which he waits.

Time and again the M.I. charge through the Fulani ranks with fixed bayonets used as lances, thus avenging the death of the Old Bird and one hundred of 'dusky Ikonas,' who, according to statements of rebel prisoners captured later, although surprised, 'died game.'

The carnage is great, but the results lasting and permanent, for Green captures the Flag.



## EPILOGUE

TEN years later, the scene changes — the greatest war in history has begun. I am sitting in a railway carriage on my way North on leave from France.

My only fellow passenger is obviously an officer from the West Coast. His tin boxes say so. We talk. He tells of the magnificent manner in which the Waffs behaved in the Cameroons.

‘Ever come across one Bellamy out there?’ I ask.

‘*Bellamy!* Bravo Bellamy! I should shay sho,’ he replies. ‘He did very well during the show, hence the expression “Bravo Bellamy”; and then they put him into an administrative job where he found himself customs officer and every other kind of officer and made a fortune.’

‘How so?’ I ask.

‘One day a huge consignment of nails, bolts, screws, etc., arrived addressed to a trader. Bellamy opened one case, as customs officer, and found it to contain 3d., 6d., 1s., 2s. pieces camouflaged with nails, etc., — so he opened the lot and found £10,000 in silver! Emptying all the money out and filling up the cases with what they should really have contained — nails, screws, bolts, etc., he told the trader to come round

## EPILOGUE

and clear his consignment!! The trader came along very pleased with life and cleared the lot over a bottle of bubbly which he supplied!

‘Why had the silver to be smuggled?’ I ask.

‘Silver currency was forbidden, save under very strict regulation, and all trading, where possible, had to be transacted in treasury notes,’ he replies. ‘This the natives hated, and as many refused to take paper money, which they didn’t understand, the trader had arranged to smuggle in the silver for trading purposes.’

‘How did Bellamy get the money to England,’ I ask.

‘I believe he had a huge stack of silver covered over with blankets for months under lock and key. His chief fear was that he would be moved before he could get rid of it. However the gods were with him and as the natives all hated the paper money, by degrees he swapped all his silver for notes! He gave them 5s. for every ten-shilling note and 10s. for every £1 — thus gaining a further £10,000 or £20,000 in all!’

‘How did you find out all this?’ I ask.

‘I travelled home with him and he told me. I saw the notes under the bunk in his cabin. Later the Colonial Office rang up to know if he wanted to go back again. I was in the club with him at the time.’

## EPILOGUE

'What did he say?' I ask.

'Only three letters — N. B. L.' . . . The joke was that he used to have the trader to lunch every Sunday and eventually 'lent' him a fiver as he was *broke!*'

'He had a heart of gold when I knew him!' I say.

'He has still,' he replies, 'he's invested his treasure, and is in a soft safe job in France praying for the war to end, when he can settle down in a cottage on the Chilterns.'

\* \* \*

Fifteen years roll by. War scars still remain unhealed. I find myself motoring towards the New Forest where some of my ancestors lived and my grandfather is buried. Nearing Romsey our eyes catch a sign 'Becton Country Restaurant — Meals any time.' We pull up — or at least stop, as it is called in mechanical language.

A biggish room — Fulani curios on the walls — a photograph of Charles Wells as a young officer. Four medals — yes, 'C. L. Wells' on the rims.

The long-lost Charles! of whom I had lost sight for over twenty years!

He comes in but does not notice me — I call him over. The complete *restaurateur* approaches swiftly and politely.

## EPILOGUE

'Rotten lunch,' I say.

'I'm sorry,' he replies, 'what is your —' then he pauses — his eyes open wider and wider — 'Bull Pup!'

'Charles. . . .'

He points out the sword and gown of the Magagi killed by him at Kotokorshi when he saved the day, stirrups, arrows, the lock and chain of the Kano gate and a cup won by him on 'Carlton's Collar Bone' at Zaria. The Koran I captured with the Emir's camels on the road to Burmi catches my eye. Countless treasures, which not only revive memories of long ago but bring back episodes long forgotten, adorn the walls of the Nigerian Room.

'Do you remember this?' he asks, taking a brass anklet from the wall.

'No,' I reply.

'I spotted it on the Sokoto battle-field on a dead Fulani's leg. It glittered, and as I thought it was Ashanti gold my orderly chopped the man's foot off with his machet to get it off! Alas! when I had it tested at home I found it to be what it is — mere brass!'

We decided to stay at Becton with Charles which means that he and I, not for the first time in our lives, sit up till 3 a.m.

'Jolly good dinner you gave us to-night,' I say.

'I cooked it myself,' he replies.

## EPILOGUE

'You always ran that mess well at Zaria,' I say. 'Do you remember when Spindle caught you cooking during some big dinner when you couldn't trust the cook?' We both laugh.

'D'you remember wondering how big the fig trees would be in thirty years' time and I replied "where shall we be in ten?" That ten just coincided with the war!' I say. 'We were in the soup.'

'I heard of the fig trees not long ago,' he answers:— 'they are now in the wilds and higher than this house! Those were great days, and, on the whole, we had fine men to serve with.'

'Think,' I answer: 'Hasler, Lowry-Cole, Morland, Festing, both the Mauds, Rose, Romilly, Christy, Green, dozens of others, all gone — the War!'

We pause in silence and ponder.

'The best part of the whole show was this: there was a hundred per cent service without thought of self,' I say.

'Save in that horrible case,' says Charles, pointing to the wall.

'Oh! There always will be some flies in any ointment — but on the whole the great idea was Britain First all the time — they were hard years but worth it.'

'I'm going to-morrow to see Dickinson,' I tell him, after a pause; 'he lives at Lymington — remember him?'

## EPILOGUE

'Yes — he got a D.S.O. in the second dash to Zaria in '02.'

'That's right,' I reply, 'haven't seen him since I left him on the hulk at Muraji exactly thirty years ago!'

'What d'you make of things to-day!' says Charles. 'Africa, India, Egypt?'

'We and our ancestors collared those places,' I reply, 'and it looks as if the "upstarts" of to-day are going to lose them for us, by not studying the new mentality.'

'How d'you mean?' asks Charles.

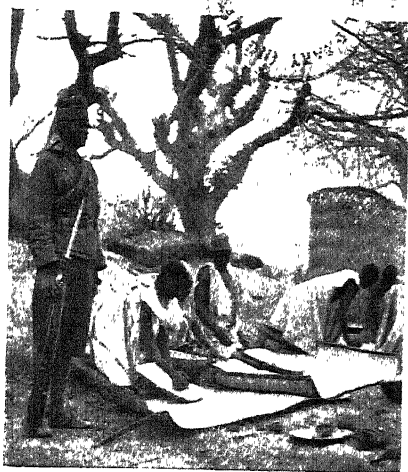
'In our days gentlemen led the Empire, and if necessary died for it. Since the war, upstarts — who are often not men — have appeared, and are mainly after money. We won by bayonets and justice, the war profiteers by greed. Now we have to consolidate by soul force and common sense: the problems are not the same. I don't like the war upstart! . Good-night, Charles — *sai gobe*. There're as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it but you've got to know how to land 'em!'

'Good-night, Bull Pup,' says Charles. 'I think you're lucky to be alive.'

'Why?' I ask.

'If you hadn't become unconscious on your way to Burmi, when chasing the Emir, you'd have been scuppered; if you'd returned to Zaria with the Old Bird, you'd have been massacred!'

## BRITISH JUSTICE



*Above:* The author (with Medical Officer), supervising the flogging of Hausa soldiers before their dismissal, for looting in civilian clothes.

*Below:* Hausa murderers, who robbed and killed a Fulani merchant, under guard, grinding their guinea corn, while awaiting execution.



## EPILOGUE

'I wonder?' I reply. 'Kismet — perhaps I was saved to slay Huns — who knows? But what about you at Kotokorshi? You saved the whole party there!'

'I believe you're only waiting for another war to break out; then you'd thoroughly enjoy yourself again,' says Charles. 'I've no use for the modern stuff.'

'The result is pretty futile now, isn't it?' I reply.

'Have you been back to Nigeria since we left?' Charles asks me.

'No,' I say, 'and I'm not sure I want to return. In our days there were none of the handicaps of civilization and all the benefits of the bush. Now, with ice, white women and competition in frocks and frills, "cattiness", "garrison back-biting," expense, trains, electric light, aeroplanes flying over from Egypt, "explorers" in motor cars, "camps of exercise," no cheap ponies or polo, and no fighting, one might as well be in India, which I am told they try to copy.'

'I wonder if their potatoes are as good as mine were?' says Charles.

'Perhaps they eat yams now, like the Yorubas!' I say. 'When people live soft in unaccustomed and pompous luxury, they often become lazy in fending for themselves as they know no better. That has happened in India: the civil servants there to-day

## EPILOGUE

cannot compare with those of sixty to a hundred years ago.'

'Anyhow,' says Charles, 'they wouldn't be there at all if it hadn't been for the soldiers!'

'Thinking it over,' I say, 'I don't suppose they save *more* money than we did!'

'No,' says Charles, 'but look at the time we had — we really "lived" while on leave — it was real hard tack often in the wilds, but the fighting and the leave were the things; and then, whatever we did, we put more "red" on the map each day and "service" was "something." Now Little Englanders and whole-sale Internationalists grouse! But I notice they don't mind taking more *cash* for what we did for the love of adventure. The "safety first" customers who feather their nests and live and grumble in pompous arrogance really have to thank the thrusters of the past for everything they've ever got.'

'You're right,' I reply; 'but let me clear your mind about these "Internationalists." There are two sorts of Internationalists to-day, those within and those without the British Commonwealth. The Nigerians of to-day — many of whom you and I helped to "rope in" thirty years ago, particularly the Fulani and Hausas — must be good Nigerians before they can hope to be good members of the British Commonwealth; and even in Nigeria they have their local problems of race and religion to solve. Similarly,

## EPILOGUE

in India, the problem is much the same. But commercialists and "money-thinkers" in this country tell us that it is wrong to hold out hope to Nigerians — despite the fact that we educate them — that when they are educated sufficiently they may fill what jobs they can in their own country. The men who say these things would not do so if they were themselves "educated" — had been taught to think imperially instead of commercially and had they experience of Colonial or Indian administration and cosmopolitan life. They are of that class who write pages of tosh instead of getting on with the job. This lack of education — thinking commercially instead of imperially — is a very great danger to our existence.'

'In other words,' says Charles, 'the Empire must evolve or crumble.'

'Quite so,' I reply; 'yet inexperienced politicians, old fashioned Macaroons — you remember the joke at Zaria — or men out of reach of reality, will persist in telling us we are to be always the same! That sword that you pushed through that Magagi in 1903 is still in their eyes the perfect and suitable weapon to use for settling and solving all Imperial problems of rule and life! Yet . . . even in the midst of the fag end of the Fulani turmoil in 1905 (the Old Bird was not killed till '06), Ash, the *Resident*, would have had you or me, soldiers, *executed* had

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we behaved to the inhabitants as Dyer did in India when he murdered hundreds of harmless men, claiming thereby to have created a "*moral effect!*" Such things as have happened in various parts of the Empire *since* the war would have been *unthinkable* in the Hausa states, when Lugard ruled, thirty years ago! *and all because of money.*'

'What about the people outside the Empire?' asks Charles, 'how can they be *made to behave?*'

'You've been out of the scramble of power since 1906,' I reply; 'you're lucky! The war gave most thinking people on both sides an awful shock; there again the people who didn't take part in the war in the front or regimental line — Fleet Street men saturated with commercialism and English country gentlemen who pride themselves on their "phlegmatic, never varying and typically English outlook" — neglect to look at or into the post-war minds of ordinary people. A man can only "behave well" when the effort is from within, and so it is with nations. The League of Nations is not a panacea, but the regular meetings between National leaders at Geneva is creating a new International mentality. It was much the same with us thirty years ago on the Niger. "British Rule" then was no panacea, but the conferences held between headmen, Sarikis, sub-alterns, Residents and Governors have resulted in the creation of a great new homogeneous country

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## EPILOGUE

within the Empire. You can't expect men buried in books, or who were hardly born when you and I were helping to mould the Empire by our conduct in the face of hostility, to behave quite so sanely, or even humanely. A lot concerning British Justice can be learnt from our Nigerian adventure.

'Good night.'

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